NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

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Design and build
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**Make game art assets
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Rob Bliss on life as
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**Traditional art
techniques**

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15 WAYS TO BE A BETTER ARTIST

*Learn how to
generate a sense
of mood with
limited colours*

DISCOVER NEW
CONCEPT ART SKILLS

How to breathe new life into your
character art with **Simon Goinard**

FUTURE

ISSUE **164**

CREATED IN

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Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

It's taken us a few missed attempts, but finally the stars (and diaries) have aligned and Simon Goinard has created the art for this month's cover. I love his ethereal style and think it's the perfect introduction to this issue's contents. We've got your painting needs covered: from how to build your own world, to taking a peek into a concept artist's workflow, all the way up to actually stepping inside your art with the wonder that is virtual reality.

We also love letting your art shine in FXPosé – our worldwide showcase of amazing art. If you want to get involved visit **http://ifxm.ag/getinifx**.

Also, please don't miss our amazing worldwide subscription deal for new subscribers. Sign up for ImagineFX and not only will you save loads of money off the cover price, you'll also get a copy of Rebelle 3, the much-loved natural media software worth a whopping $89.99! I can't imagine you'll need more reasons to sign up, but I can exclusively reveal we're soon to start an eight-part series on figure drawing with master artist Patrick J Jones, and there's still time to subscribe so you don't miss an instalment. Turn to page 4 now!

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com
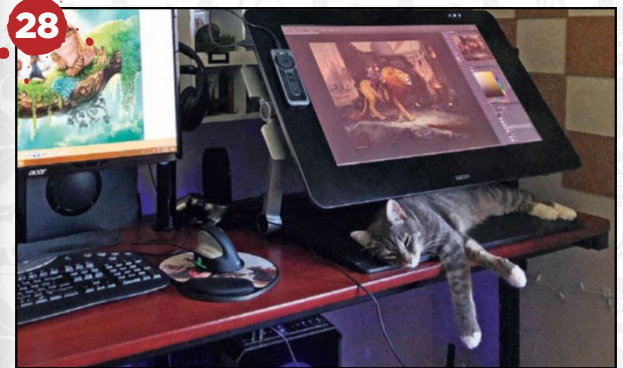
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Miaow in Residence
This is Minion. His owner is Kiri Østergaard Leonard. I want this cat. I want this studio. Sob.

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Expedition Art
Iain McCaig and other world-famous artists join together to help the plight of endangered animals.

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Renaissance man
Not only does Trent Kaniuga show us his sketches, he also delivers shocking news about those Ninja Turtles.

Free gift worth $89.99!

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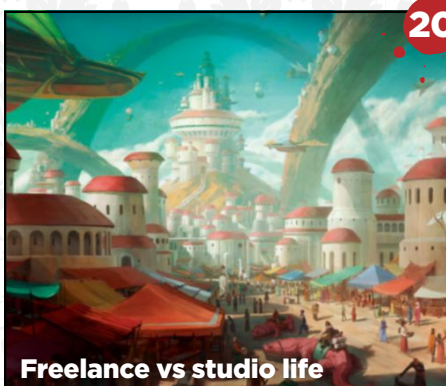
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ImagineFX Resources

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Getting hold of this issue's videos and custom brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at **https://ifxm.ag/conceptart164skills**

OVER 5 HOURS of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!

WORKSHOP

00:56:34

GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from this issue's resource files...

1 Go to the website
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar):
https://ifxm.ag/conceptart164skills

2 Find the files you want
Search through the list of resources to download.

3 Download what you need...
...or watch videos on our YouTube page (**https://ifxm.ag/youtube-ifx**).

Create art in VR with Quill and Oculus

Step inside your art by the power of virtual reality. Martin Nebelong uses Quill and Oculus to create an epic landscape. Watch his video, then turn to page 58.
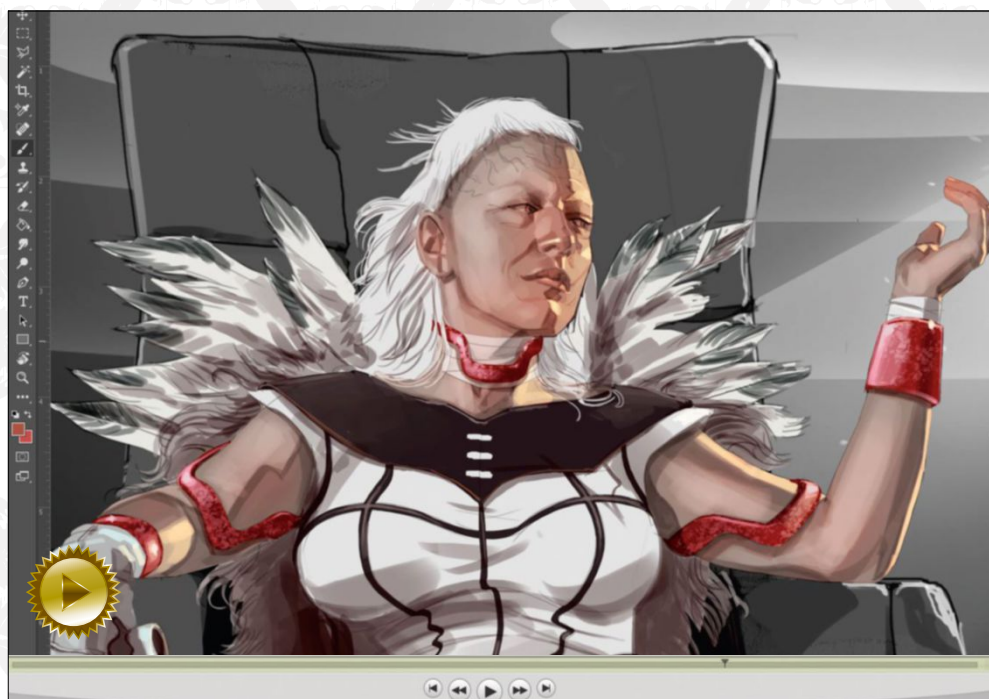
Develop a character concept that informs an entire world

In his video Anthony Macbain illustrates a scene of menace from an original sci-fi project, Dawn of the Paladin, which helps dictate the tone of the story. See page 68 for more insights.

Discover how to use the blend modes in Photoshop

Mark White's video takes you through the basics of Photoshop's blend modes, which are key to how to create more natural-looking artwork. His Core Skills article is on page 64.
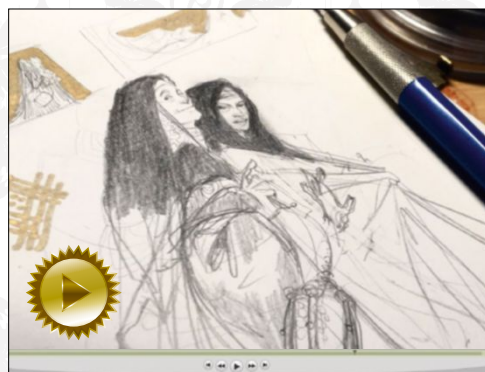
Watch how gold and silver leaf can transform watercolours

Sophie Klesen takes her complex composition to the next level with her skilful application of metallic leaf. Her short video gives an overview of the process, and there's more on page 104.

FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Anton Oxenuk

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.antonoxenuk.com

Anton is a painter and illustrator living in Las Vegas. His most recent series explores the change brought about by the amount of social media in our lives.
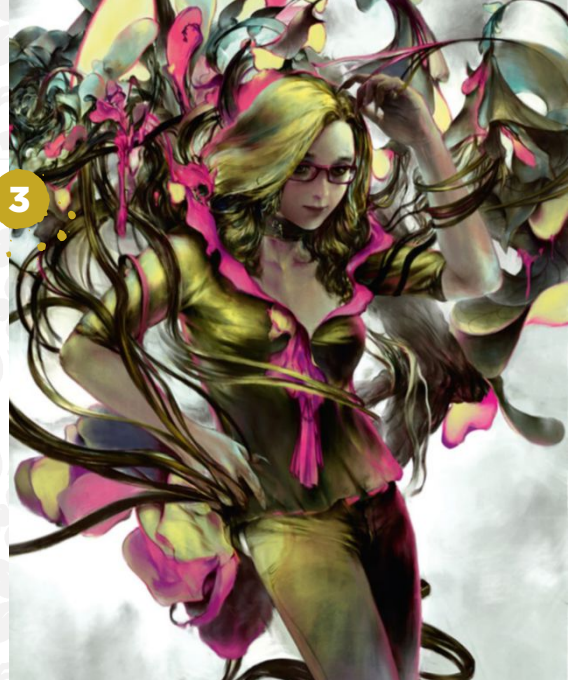
1 INVESTMENT
"Tending to our social media is a task that demands resources. We invest our time into it, hoping the digital soil is fertile and the investment is a smart one."

2 BRANCHES
"We branch out online, creating multiple profiles for ourselves on social media, all feeding into us. We love ourselves and now there's just so much more of us to love."

3 PARALYSIS
"With all eyes on us, every new post, opinion or statement is a risk. Do we dare to speak and be heard?"

4 FEED
"Our feeds become reflective of our lives. We trim and curate our feeds, taking care of them like our little gardens: watch the fruits grow, share them, cut the branches."

Jamie Noguchi

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.artstation.com/jamienoguchi

Jamie is a self-published cartoonist and the co-founder of Super Art Fight. "The first things I learned how to draw were giant transforming robots, and they've stuck with me ever since," he says.

1 BIG BAD WOLF
"I'm working on redesigning the classic Little Red Riding Hood fairytale as a tokusatsu show. This is my fully armoured interpretation of the wolf in typical kaijin style."

2 MAGS
"Fan art of the main character from Monica Gallagher's Assassin Roommate webcomic. I wanted to give her some lightweight armour instead of her regular dark hoodie."
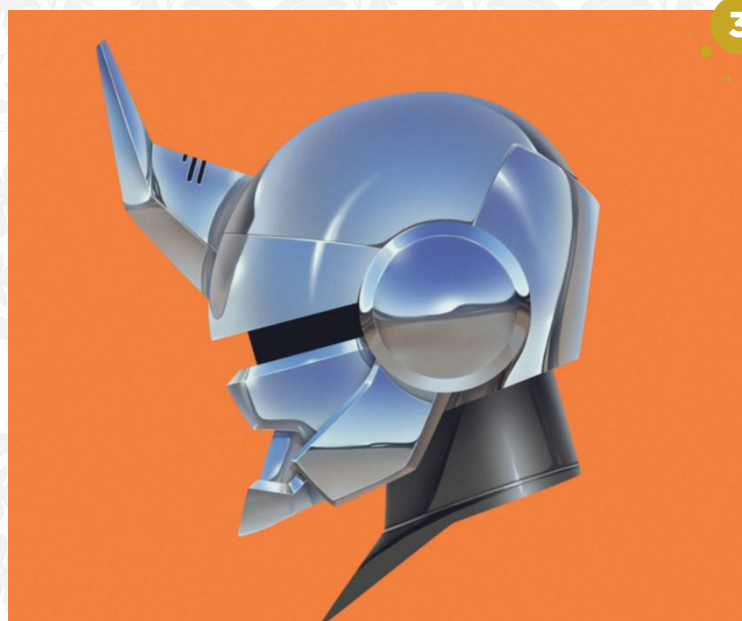
3 METAL BEETLE
"The month of September is Tokutember, an event I created where you design your own tokusatsu hero. This is my version of a Metal Hero."

4 RED RIDER
"My Kamen Rider interpretation of the Red character. The cape was fun to design, although I don't know how practical it is!"

FXPosé

Devin Korwin

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.devinkorwin.com

"My favourite part of painting is creating worlds that I can lose myself in," says concept artist Devin. "My goal is to achieve a sense of mystery and wonder."

1 THE SEARCH
"I was inspired by orientalist painters for this. It started off as a horizontal composition but I extended the canvas down as I went on."

2 DRAGON
"This was inspired by Gustave Doré's illustrations for the Divine Comedy. I love the sense of darkness he was able to achieve."

Want to submit your work? Visit http://ifxm.ag/getinifx
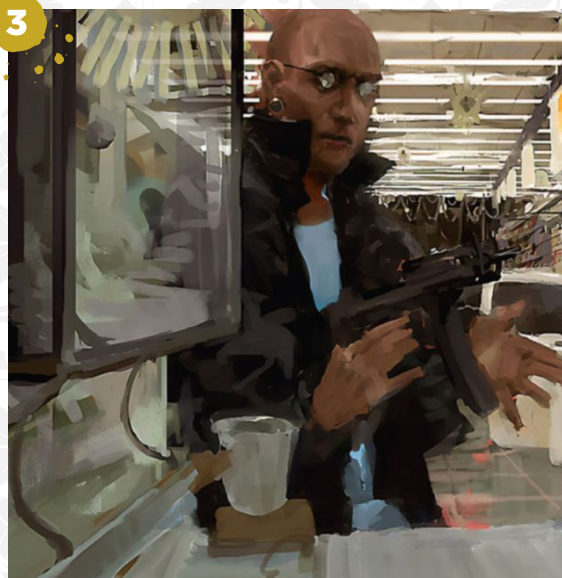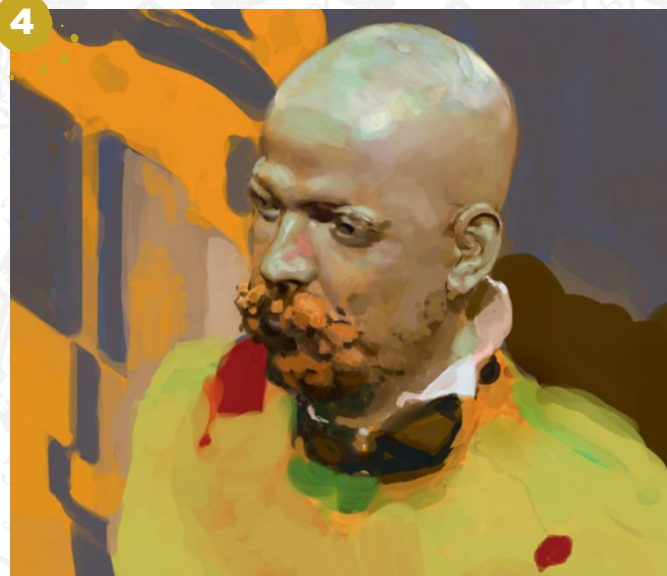
3 CONVENIENCE STORE

"This scene depicts a store robbery from the point of view of the cashier. I wanted to evoke a sense of action while still flattening out the composition into an abstract design."

4 BEARDED MAN

"For this one I tried out a new workflow for painting portraits. I had a lot of fun designing the various shapes in the beard."

FXPosé

Dominique Gilis

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Photoshop, 3ds Max, Substance Painter
WEB: www.artstation.com/doms

Dominique loves creating characters and creatures. The real trigger for her artistic career was when she first played World of Warcraft.

1 WIND

"Wind is an air elemental who's in a constant state of levitation. She makes a distinct sound, caused by the wind chimes that tinkle as she moves."

2 ROOTS

"The idea was to represent a strong, powerful and feminine divinity related to nature; beautiful but ruthless to those who try to get in her way."
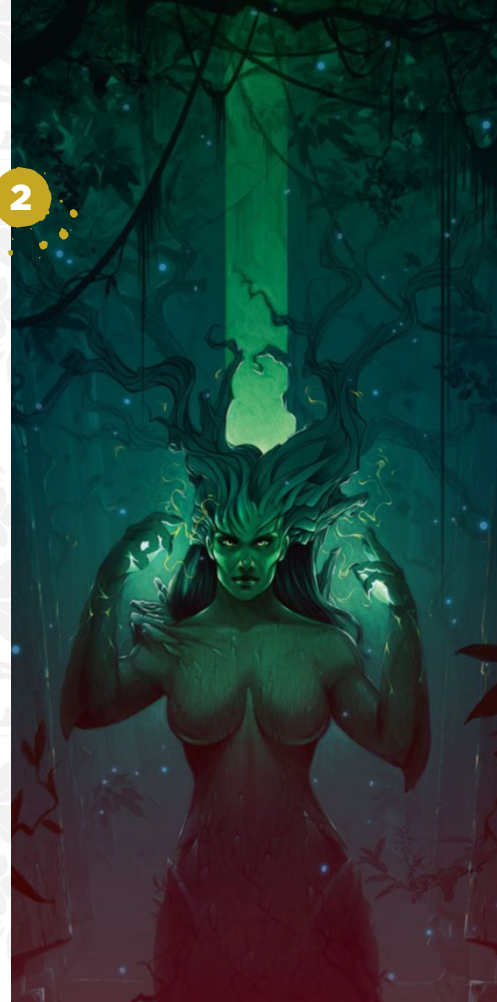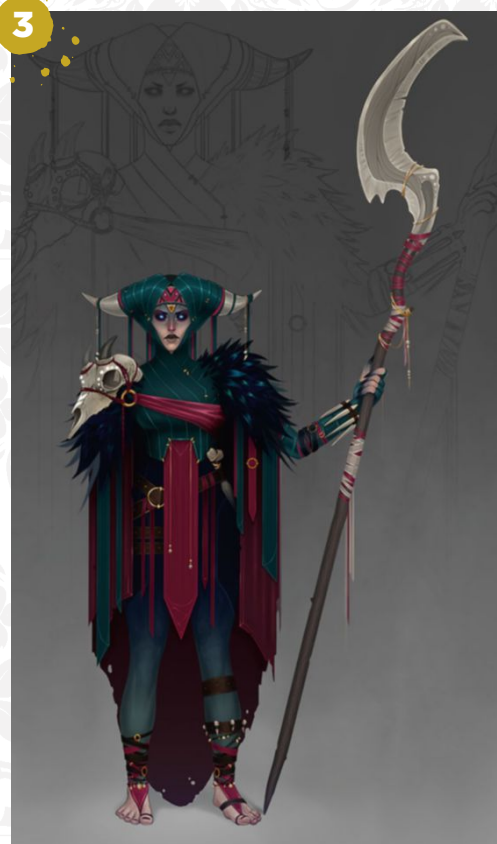
3 GUARDIAN

"This character is a former mercenary. She has been hired to be the only guardian of a range of mystic artefacts from an ancient civilisation, and protects the world from them."

4 **ICE**
"Ice is a powerful elemental mage, as cold as the power that flows through her veins. I painted this during a mentorship with concept artist Anthony Jones."

FXPosé

Neil Webber

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Clip Studio Paint Pro **WEB:** www.neilawebber.com

Neil worked as an animator for 20 years before becoming a full-time artist. Alongside his, folklore-inspired fantasy images, he has an ongoing satirical project called Haunted Ephemera.

1 THE SILVER TREES
"I like the idea of Otherworld creatures roaming our world and being difficult to recognise. You have to look carefully to see their otherworldly nature."

2 THE WAR RAVEN
"This was a character I created when I was 16. It was originally a standard male warrior type, I've now reimagined the War Raven as a woman."

3 LITTLE MONSTERS
"I like to explore the themes of fantasy through images of subtle horror. This piece hints at creatures that are so small their world can easily be missed."

Should I stay or should I go? Studio vs freelance life

Decision time Is it time to go your own way, or are you better off working in-house? **Dom Carter** asks pro artists for their views…

Careers are constantly marked by forks in the road, with digital art being no exception. Whether it's settling on a niche in the industry, or opting to pursue further education instead of paid work, there are plenty of big questions artists have to ask themselves. One of the toughest choices to make is deciding whether to go freelance or work in a studio.

Going freelance has the lure of flexibility, whereas studio life offers security and human contact, so how is an artist meant to pick a route? Personal finances, current skill level and career aspirations are all key factors to consider, but given that the industry can throw you a curve ball, sometimes the choice is made for you.

This is just what happened to freelance concept artist and illustrator **Deiv Calviz** when things started to get shaky at the local outsourcing studio that he worked at.

"A lot of people were being laid off and projects were being cancelled," Deiv says. "I was one of the last few people left in the studio. By this time, I had begun to take on some freelance work for a trading card game. It was a project that would span a few months, so freelance had started to become a better choice." ➤
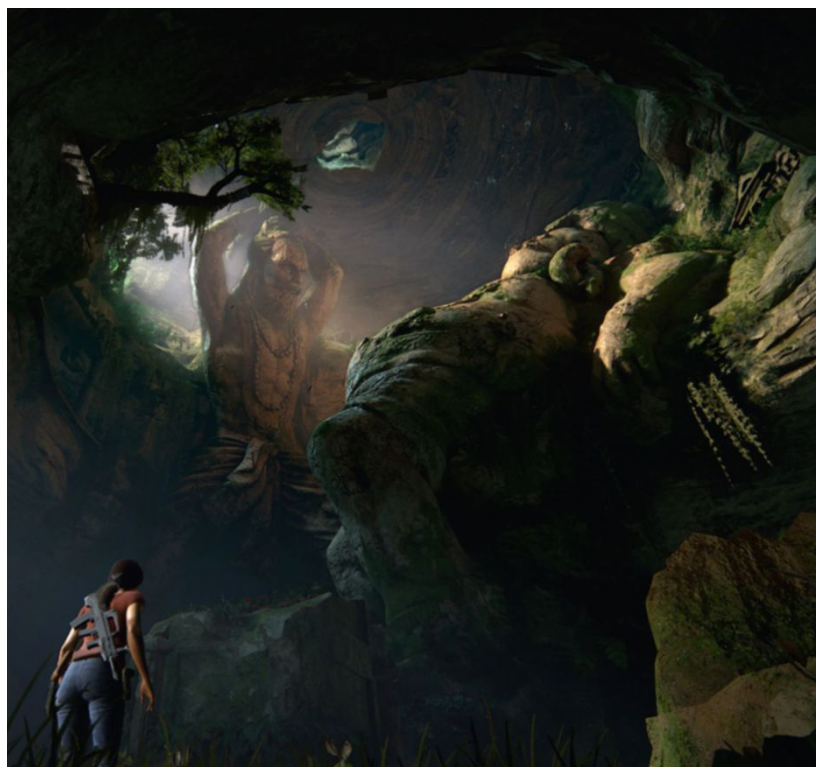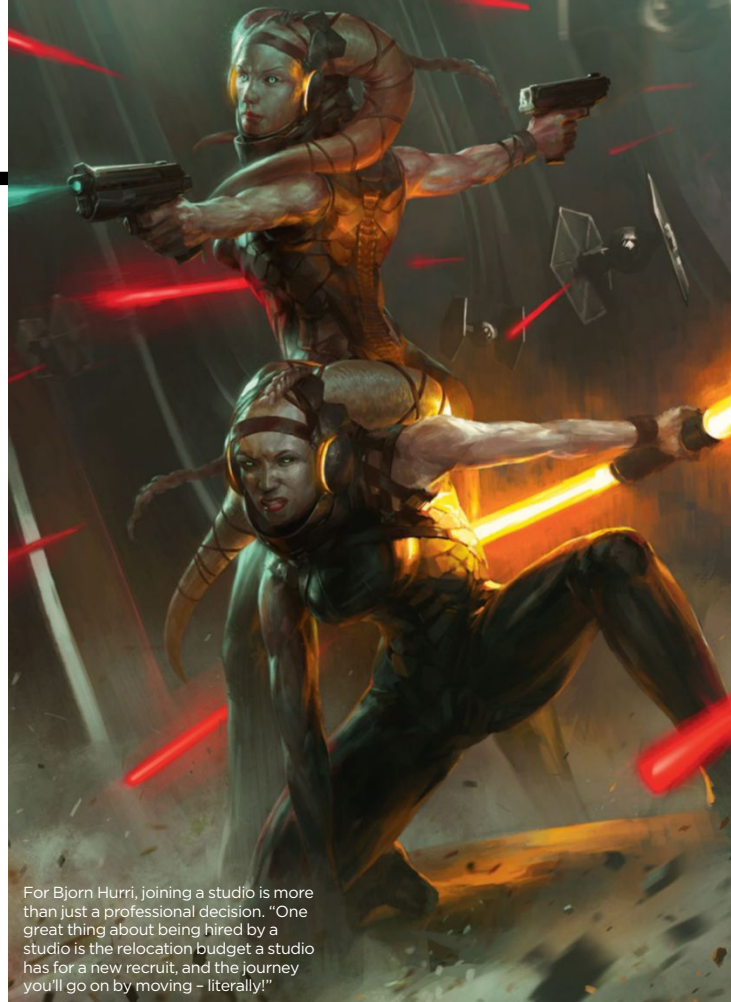
For Bjorn Hurri, joining a studio is more than just a professional decision. "One great thing about being hired by a studio is the relocation budget a studio has for a new recruit, and the journey you'll go on by moving – literally!"

➤ **Alayna Danner** is another artist who had the freelance life thrust upon her, although thanks to some groundwork the career change was a blessing in disguise. "I had already been working on the side for an analog game company Rio Grande Games. Being laid off was actually very good for me because Rio had two years' worth of work for me to do," says the illustrator and concept artist. "I've had steady freelance work ever since then."

SHOW YOUR WORKING

The fear of not having enough paid work prevents a lot of artists from going freelance. But for Naughty Dog

Day-to-day conversations in a studio are a big appeal for Boon Cotter. "It's the energy of working as part of an enthusiastic and passionate team that drives me every day to be better at what I do."

"Like any other job, freelancing can be difficult," says Deiv. "Some say it can be more difficult than a regular job, but there are risks to everything, and there are also great rewards to risks."

lighting artist **Boon Cotter**, the hassle of time management proved too much. "I was always 'on', and that drained me," says Boon. "Working freelance, in a way, felt like 24/7 crunch to me.

"I've always enjoyed studio work in part due to the social aspect; being in the trenches so to speak. I feel much more connected with a project when I'm on the ground with the team. Much of my inspiration comes from the people around me, watching them do really cool work, and wanting to help make it even better."

"An artist should ideally experience both studio and freelance work," says lead artist at Opus Artz and former freelancer, **Bjorn Hurri.** A lot of the choice depends on an artist's character and preferences, which includes an attitude to money.

"Studio gigs are great for long term, steady career progression with a safer economic outlook," Bjorn adds. "Also, you generally have an annual review of your personal progression as an artist. There's a natural cap on opportunities for senior positions, but you'd play the long game to get there."

BALANCING ACT

Juggling incoming work and finances are key aspects that potential freelancers need to keep in mind. "Gauge what you're doing against what you're being paid," advises Alayna. "Be wary, but also evaluate what you can do with your images. If a company lets you sell prints of the work you complete, that can add a lot to your income, but keep in mind what they'll be assigning you."

And if you find yourself in a freelance dry spell, there are always ways to keep busy. "Lots of websites regularly post job offers, such as Upwork, DeviantArt, Unity and Unreal forums," says Deiv. "You can even directly email companies such as Wizards of the Coast, Paizo and Games Workshop." ➤

Selling at conventions helps freelancer Alayna drum up work. "GenCon is a fantastic convention for getting work for different gaming companies, I've been attending and selling artwork there for eight years now."

> 66 **I feel much more connected with a project when I'm on the ground with the team** 99

Thinking of joining a studio? Bjorn recommends you study its track record. "A general suggestion would be to have a think of what you want for the coming years artistically, but also economically."

BOON COTTER

The lighting artist reveals what it's like to work for a studio

What attributes do studios look for in an artist?

Skill, talent, enthusiasm… all the key résumé qualities. But I also think personality, culture and individuality. Naughty Dog is known for not having producers in the traditional sense. We're all expected to take responsibility and ownership, to make this thing the best it can be.

Does a studio role guarantee job security?

It's hard to say. I prefer the month-to-month security of working full time in a studio. But I have friends who thrive on freelance work, get paid well and take ridiculously long vacations, so maybe they've got it figured out! I'm happy being a lighting artist at Naughty Dog. It doesn't feel like work, and that was always my career aspiration.

What's your favourite part of studio life?

When I'm having a tough day, I get into work, sit down and watch some reaction videos to The Last of Us Part II, or Uncharted: The Lost Legacy. I see the effect that our work has on those people and I feel immense pride to be a part of that. Then I'm not having a tough day any more.

What's the working structure of Naughty Dog like?

Like most studios, we have our key departments. But the borders are fuzzy. I have areas I'm working on. I'll talk to the art director, get some ideas. Maybe give some of my own. I'll experiment, make discoveries and present them. Some will stay, some will go, depending on how we feel about it.

Boon is a senior lighting artist at Naughty Dog who's worked on Uncharted 4: A Thief's End and The Last of Us Part II.

www.artstation.com/booncotter
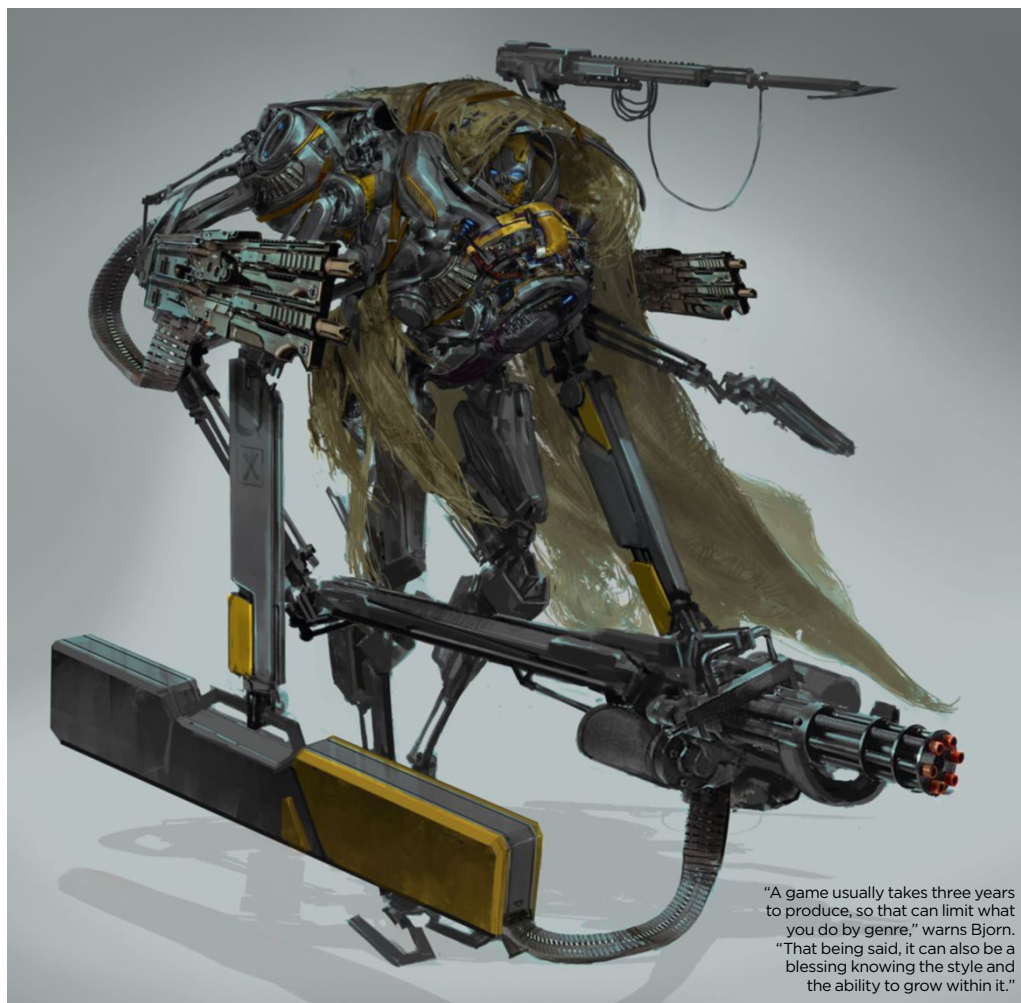
"A game usually takes three years to produce, so that can limit what you do by genre," warns Bjorn. "That being said, it can also be a blessing knowing the style and the ability to grow within it."

➤ Self-promotion is time well spent for freelancers in between projects. "Most of my clients discovered me through ArtStation and DeviantArt," says Deiv. "It's important to post regularly so people will discover you. I put proper tags, titles, descriptions and even a website link or name on the actual image. All these will help to gain more reach. A lot of artists don't put enough time on these basic things."

A good portfolio is crucial for both freelancers and studios, so it's

Alayna gets her work seen by sharing it on Pixiv, DeviantArt, ArtStation and more. "It can be a pain to upload in so many places, but it's important to get your work in front of as many eyes as possible."

important to get it right. "Be sure to tailor and build your portfolio to exactly what industry you want to be in," says Alayna. "Take freelance work on the side to build up a client base if your job allows it. If you want to do realistic fantasy art, be sure to have that in your portfolio. If you get a portfolio review from an art director, have a thick skin and don't be too attached to your pieces. If you aren't to their level you can evolve, and the best way to do that is to just keep working at it."

CREATIVE FREEDOM

Job satisfaction can be found in either freelance or studio roles, but does one offer more artistic fulfilment over the other? "It depends on the studio and contract," says Boon, "but I've never felt like I've had more creative freedom in my life than right now. Having the freedom to make my own creative choices in a studio like Naughty Dog gives me real ownership of the results."

Contrary to received wisdom, studios offer a comparable amount of

❝ Take freelance work on the side to build up a client base if your job allows it ❞

artistic flexibility to freelance roles. Experimenting with both positions, if possible, is the best way to figure out which one's right for you. Remember, though, that you're picking your payoff no matter which route you choose.

"Freelancing is a full-time job," warns Deiv. "If someone would like to freelance with the mindset that life will be easier, that's really not the case. If you don't have the discipline to stick to a schedule, it's very easy slack off.

"On the flip side, with a freelance gig there's usually no middle person. You work directly with your client and you can suggest ideas up front. In studios, politics and middle people can cause too much unnecessary revisions and bad ideas." ●

Working with a studio team has been crucial for Boon's development. "Some of my best lighting work has come from a designer or an FX artist or an animator giving me feedback."

© Naughty Dog

Bjorn weighs up the benefits of freelance life. "You're disconnected from the studio; but able to work on multiple titles and scales."
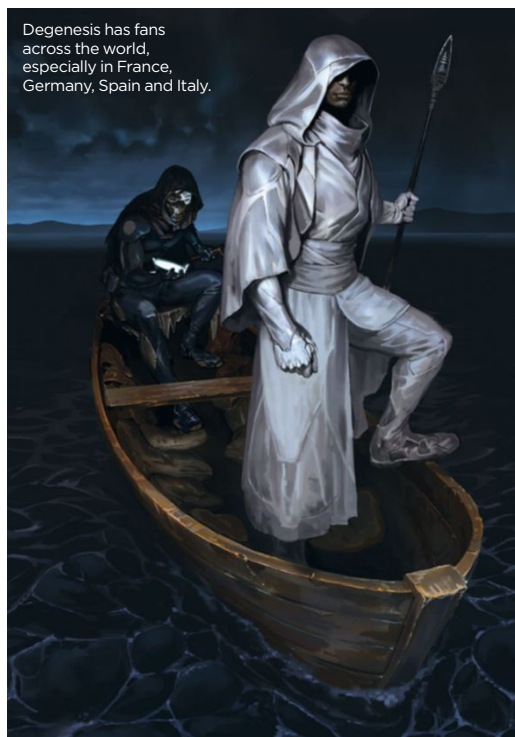
Degenesis has fans across the world, especially in France, Germany, Spain and Italy.

The game's futuristic setting is an Earth ravaged by war, while mutation is rife among society.

Future shock

World reborn SixMoreVodka accompanies the relaunch of Degenesis, its post-apocalyptic RPG, with some striking character concept art

Berlin concept art studio SixMoreVodka has found a unique way to gain exposure within the creative industry and attract new clients: launching its own tabletop RPG, set in a 'primal punk' world.

Degenesis was originally published in 2004, and has attracted fans around the globe. Now the studio is releasing a new Rebirth Edition and an associated fiction book, Black Atlantic.

"My co-author Christian Günther and I originally came up with the idea of creating a post-apocalyptic RPG universe, because we felt there were a lack of games anchored in that genre," says SixMoreVodka CEO and founder **Marko Djurdjevic**. "We wanted to create our own take on our favourite genre, but mix it up with unique flavours."
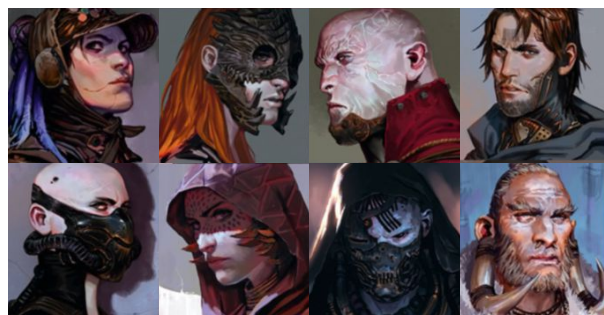
The new version is essentially a reboot of the original "garage band project" presented as a full studio offering. It showcases the talents of SixMoreVodka artists such as Jelena Djurdjevic, Gerald Parel and Michal Ivan, who normally work for clients such as Riot Games. "The artists retain the copyright to their images, which enables them to share their art in ways

"The universe of Degenesis is so dense and rich in characters," says Marko Djurdjevic.

Marko explains that,"The game is our version of a high-end portfolio that everyone can contribute to."

they can't always do when working for clients," Marko points out.

There is no specific art style to Degenesis, he adds, "other than that it has settled somewhere in fantastic realism, with a rather down-to-earth approach to design and functionality. A lot of the game's lore is rooted in hard science and we've always stayed away from being too comic bookish or over-the-top in our depictions of scenes and characters."

For more details and to order the game's Rebirth Edition or a copy of Black Atlantic in a variety of formats, visit **https://ifxm.ag/degenesis**.

> ❝ **A lot of the game's lore is rooted in hard science and we've always stayed away from being too comic bookish** ❞

"We've won many clients over the years through the exposure Degenesis created for us," reveals Marko.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

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Kiri Østergaard Leonard

Sun trap From Denmark to Texas by way of New York, this Danish artist invites us into her cat-friendly studio

When we moved from a tiny New York City apartment down to sunny Austin, Texas, one of the most important features of the new home we were looking for was a good studio space. I'd been working out of the corner of our small bedroom in Brooklyn for years, a room that never got any sunlight, therefore plenty of light and a good-sized space was absolutely key for our house hunt.

We missed out on nine houses before we found one that had the same floorplan as the first house we had fallen in love with. The housing market in Austin is crazy – things sell so fast – so I feel fortunate we found this place. My studio is located on the upper floor. It has an awesome open overhang into the living room below, so I can see the whole house when I'm up there, working, during the day.

Another favourite part of the studio for me is the large, west-faced ➤➤

This is Apocalina. She began as a simple piece to improve my portfolio but grew into her own story. Once I'm done with my current personal project, I'll be writing and illustrating a full book with her.
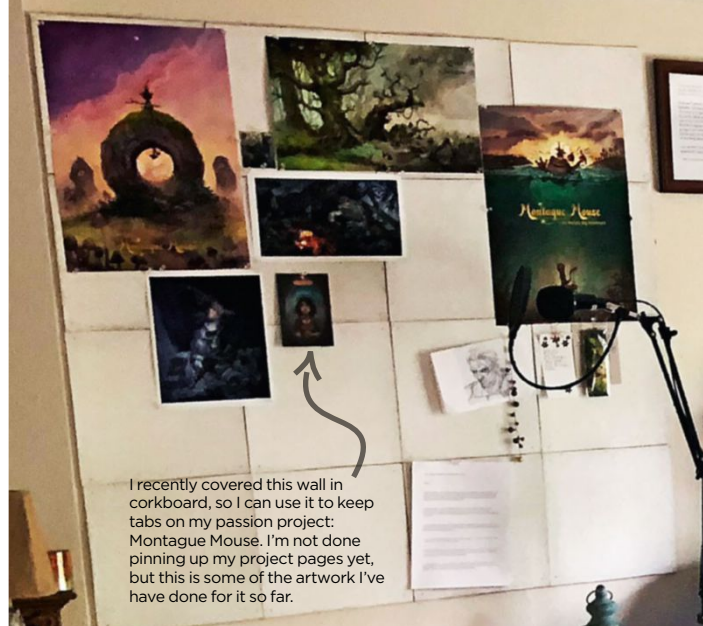
I recently covered this wall in corkboard, so I can use it to keep tabs on my passion project: Montague Mouse. I'm not done pinning up my project pages yet, but this is some of the artwork I've have done for it so far.

Tucked away in my bookcase are several bell jars with figurines. The most important one is a sculpture I made of the main character from my passion project, the Montague Mouse book I'm working on.

Here you can really see my book collection as well as all the knick-knacks that are scattered among my books.

I'm a sucker for inspirational quotes, so much that I even have several tattooed on my left arm. The quote I've framed here is a comment on Rothko by Simon Schama. The key inspirational part for me reads: "This isn't about now, this is about forever."

Above my workstation are two sets of cubby holes that are filled with memorabilia. These are all items that inspire my work or assist as reference in some way. My favourite thing here is the little Coraline doll above the Cintiq.

My most important device is my Wacom Cintiq. I do most of my work on it. My desk is a standing desk with a PC setup that the Cintiq's connected to. I try to stand most of the time, but I also have a drafting chair so I can sit when I feel the need to.

My drafting table is a replica of a vintage drafting table that I picked up on Amazon. It's immensely useful having a big table to work on. Not just for drawing, but also for packaging shop orders or laying out projects.

The second most important thing in my studio is my bookcase. I'm an avid collector of art books and regularly read through them to find inspiration or ideas. I'm not sure how many books I have at this point, but I'm running out of space on my shelves.

My Cintiq is mounted on an ergonomic stand, on the recommendation of my chiropractor. Having an ergonomic workspace is so important for your wellbeing. Look after your back!

➤ window. Every night I get to see the beautiful sunset, something I didn't got to see at all for the six years we lived in Brooklyn. With animal wildlife and trees right outside, I feel much closer to the natural world that inspires so much of my artwork.

THREE FELINE COMPANIONS

I work from home and am usually up and at it by eight o'clock every morning. I'm joined in my studio space by my three rescue felines Mishu (12), Little Kitty (10) and recently our newly adopted Minion (one). The cats keep me sane. Working from home is lonely, no matter how happy you are with your space, so having some form of life around you to interact with, does your mental health immensely good. That being said, they can also be a source of interruption!

My studio is decorated with knick-knacks and books that I've collected throughout my years living in the US.

This is Yarrow, a blind elven druid played by my dear friend Kerri Lyn Adams in our D&D group. I have immensely enjoyed illustrating portraits for all of the group.

> 66 I feel much closer to the natural world that inspires my art 99

I moved over here in 2010 to pursue art. When I immigrated I had to leave everything I owned behind, except for two carefully packed suitcases of clothes and books. My collector soul was quickly put to work to discover trinkets and treasures for a new nest. I've always had a strong need for nesting and building a little whimsical world around me in the space I create in. The items help inspire my work and many of them are tied to memories and highlight from my life.

Award-winning illustrator and artist Kiri imbues her work with childhood memories and a dash of mysterious darkness. You can find her work at www.kirileonard.com.

The postcard in the copper frame was sent to me by Tony DiTerlizzi. I'm a huge fan of his work, though I've yet to have the pleasure of meeting him. I sent him a postcard when I first set out to become an artist and he sent me this one back and wished me good luck on my path. I'll treasure that postcard forever!

I'm putting together a sketchbook of my best drawings from recent years and have been going through old sketchbooks to pick out anything that's worthwhile. Minion likes to interrupt more so than the other cats – he couldn't resist all the open sketchbooks. It's cost me a couple of drawings, because he likes to eat paper.

This was my contribution to this year's #MerMay art challenge on Twitter. I'm toying with the idea of doing a full calendar of post-apocalyptic mermaids.

My reading corner and printer station. I have a Canon Pixma Pro-100 printer which I adore. The print quality is just amazing, and it can print images up to 13x19 inches. When I work I like to do print tests to see what the art looks like off-screen, so having a good printer is essential. I picked up the chair from IKEA. I don't normally go for yellow, but this was so yellow I couldn't resist!

Artists unite for animals

Creature comforts Leading industry creatives come together to highlight the plight of endangered species

Some of the world's best-known concept artists, designers and fine artists are joining forces for a new book to raise money and awareness for endangered animals.

In Danger: Threatened & Endangered Animals will include work by 51 artists including Aaron Blaise, Manny Carrasco, Jason Chan, Bobby Chiu, Kim Jung Gi, Jonathan Kuo, David Levy, Joe Weatherly, Terryl Whitlatch and Iain McCaig.

Ninety seven animals will feature in the book, each accompanied by fun facts about them and insightful thoughts from the artists.

"I've always been a supporter of groups like the World Wildlife Foundation, but this project enables me to use what I do best, to help in a meaningful way," says **Iain McCaig**. The concept artist's contribution to the book is a watercolour portrait of an orangutan called Towan, who used to live in Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, US. "Towan was the motion-capture inspiration for the digital orangutan in the new Planet of the Apes movies, and was a gentle old soul," Iain says.

The artist, who's best known for his work on the Star Wars and Harry Potter films , believes the key to drawing animals is making it personal. "You draw a specific character, and take the time to really get to know their personality," he says. "Even if you have to invent or infer, a drawing with a story keeps your art alive."

Published by Imagination International, 90 per cent of the profits from In Danger: Threatened & Endangered Animals will go towards wildlife and nature conservation. You can pre-order your copy, priced £45, at **https://ifxm.ag/in-danger**.

A global collective of 51 professional artists is working to raise awareness of wildlife issues.

"This beautiful eagle needs human intervention and care, otherwise it will cease to exist," says Manny Carrasco.

"Overfishing is a serious problem, and the bigeye tuna is no stranger to it," says David Levy.

Joe Weatherly's oil painting of a black rhino, one of many species on the WWF's critically endangered list.

"I've always had a soft spot for elephants," says Aaron Blaise. "To be in their presence is awe-inspiring."

❝ This project enables me to use what I do best, to help in a meaningful way ❞

"The snow leopard is one of my favourite big cats," reveals Jonathan Kuo.

"One of Towan's favourite activities was to paint, so it seemed fitting to set him free inside a painting," says Iain McCaig.

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Letters
YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

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ImagineFX goals

One of my goals is to be good enough to have my work featured in ImagineFX. I especially loved Mel Milton's article from issue 162. He gave such amazing insight and tips on developing better work habits. The magazine just keeps on getting better!
Estanides Gomez (Tani), via email

Claire replies *I'm with you, Tani, I loved Mel's workshop, too! If anyone missed his motivational advice from issue 162, there's still time to get a copy. Turn to page 42 to see how to get hold of a past edition.*

One of reader Estanides's artworks. He was particularly taken by Mel Milton's recent workshop. Were you inspired by it? Let us know!

No traditional art

I enjoy ImagineFX, which always informs and inspires. Just a few thoughts on content. First, I buy the magazine to learn new skills and see the great work of artists from around the world. Articles covering digital techniques or art subjects that apply to both digital and traditional art are great (anatomy or colour/value, say). However, I'm not interested in tutorials on using watercolours, oils, acrylics and so on. Plenty of publications cover traditional media, while digital art is far less well-served.

Second, I liked the Q&A section. It was a useful feature for digital beginners like myself. Third, more tutorials for Clip Studio Paint, Photoshop and Procreate please. Fourth, less 3D stuff please. Again, there are magazines for this. If you must put 3D content in then Sculptris, Blender or SketchUp would be better.

Finally, while I'm sure some readers have ambitions of becoming

Ara Kermanikian used ZBrush in his tutorial from issue 162. Do you want to see more 3D articles in ImagineFX?

professional artists, I would guess many, if not most, just make art for their own enjoyment. Occasional articles on how to make it professionally are okay, but I think they're appearing too often and have little value to those of us who are just having fun.
John, via email

Claire replies *John, thank you for your thoughtful comments. The remit of ImagineFX is broad and every issue we focus on many different art skills, themes, industries and mediums, so I know that we can't please everyone all of the time. As for your comment on people creating art for enjoyment, I do hear your point that not all of you want to get into the industry, so I'll consider this when commissioning in the future. We're all about creating art that you want to create, whether it's in a professional or hobbyist capacity. I hope that shines through. If it doesn't, I'll have to try harder! Readers, any more thoughts on this?*

Beginner friendly please

I'm a fairly new digital artist and I look high and low for tutorials and new ways of improving my understanding of Illustrator and Photoshop. While I appreciate the amount of tutorials you supply, I wish they were more newbie friendly. I find myself confused about exactly what I'm supposed to be doing, which in turn becomes frustrating. Maybe dedicating one tutorial a month to all the newer artists out there would be a solution. Even better, you could make a "newbie" special edition to get anyone else like me up to speed.
Andrea Rano, via email

Claire replies *Hello Andrea! We already dedicate two workshops a month to new artists. Our Core Skills series looks at the basic foundations of a type of software or art medium and each month takes a look at a particular function or skill. The current run of Core Skills teach you the Photoshop basics (page 64) and watercolours (page 110). I'll look into how we can further help beginners.*

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?
Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit **http://ifxm.ag/163-ifx** for details.

FRESH PAINT
New works that have grabbed our attention
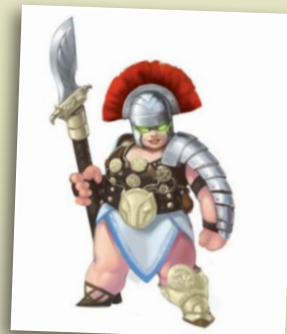
Carlo Spagnola
@carlospagnola
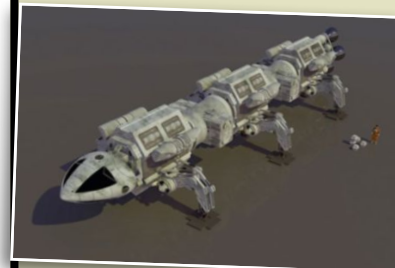
NickMacarty
@Space1999Scifi
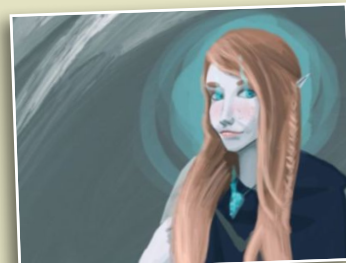
Preston J Alexander
@_pralex

Sal Vador
@thedarkcloak

If you've created art that you want us to shout about simply tag us on Twitter or Instagram, or find us on Facebook!

BLOWING THEM AWAY
Rob was an early adopter of 3D software, experimenting in Modo, then ZBrush.

Artist Portfolio

ROB BLISS

This digital art pioneer tells **Beren Neale** that tomorrow's concept artists must be "ballsy but polite" to make an impression

FACE FOR RADIO
Rob's work for Jack the Giant Slayer showcased his skills in harnessing the grotesque for a believable, menacing character.

R ob Bliss was giving up on his nascent career as an illustrator. Fresh out of Brighton's School of Art, he had moved to Brixton, London, but hadn't exactly hit the ground running. "More like face planted onto a concrete car park," he recalls.

Although he was subsidised by the government's Enterprise Allowance Scheme, money was tight and after 18 months of rejections, he was done. So he applied to work at his local branch of Forbidden Planet.

"I didn't get that either," Rob says, but his sketchbook, which he carried with him everywhere, caught the eye of the store manager. "He said, 'I know some people up at 2000 AD, so we're not gonna employ you, but maybe I can recommend you to them.'

"The saying 'Getting a foot in the door' is repeated so much that it becomes meaningless. But it's true. You can have what seems like a hundred foot-wide wall in front of you, and then a little door just gets opened by someone from the other side, and you slip through."

This was Rob's big break, and it was a trial by fire. He was tasked with drawing the first 36 pages of the new Igor Goldkind-penned comic The Clown, which would run from 1992

A FEAST OF BEASTS

Harry Potter spin-off Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them provided Rob with a chance to move away from the human form and tap into the animalistic side of his art.

❝ You can have a hundred foot-wide wall in front of you, and then a little door gets opened by someone from the other side ❞

Artist Portfolio

➤ to 1994. It was a title that another artist in the 2000 AD ranks was set to draw, but whose rising star meant he was too busy to take it on. Indeed, it was the artist who'd originally lit a fire under Rob to make a career out of art. But more on him later…

EVERYTHING AS ENTERTAINMENT

Growing up in Trowbridge, south-west England, and going to school in Bath, Rob's recollections of his 1970s childhood sound uneventful. "There weren't a lot of distractions," he says, "and there was plenty of times that you could be bored." No epic fantasy TV series to consume on the weekend, just the single Sunday TV film, or the odd trip to the cinema.

The dreaded writing exercises at school morphed into surreptitious drawing excursions. B-movie cinema outings fuelled his imagination, and his growing collection of 2000 AD

> **There was a visceral reaction to it that I didn't have to pretend existed**

and Action Comics were read and then copied. Faced with all this, Rob says that, "I began to see everything as entertainment."

After school he studied illustration in Brighton with thoughts of working on magazines, in the style of Ralph Steadman or Raymond Briggs. Then he saw Simon Bisley's work. "That was really year zero for me, because I always had a bit of a problem of never having come across something that I truly believed in artistically."

In the "right-on, uptight", and not a little narrow-minded world of late-1980s art college, "I felt like I was surrounded by people who were faking it, and I felt autistic. Nothing made sense to me," Rob says. He liked the 2000 AD art of the time, "and Brian Bolland's work, etc, but they all seemed liked these 40-year olds or something. Until Simon came along, especially his Sláine stuff, and it was like, 'Fuck. What's that?' It was a mixture of horror and excitement. There was a visceral reaction to it that I didn't have to pretend existed."

The Clown gig was beginning to feel too much like an office job. Rob quit a couple of episodes before its end, and Greg Staples took on the final strips.

OPENING A BOOK INTO THE ARTIST'S SOUL

When he has no deadline to hit, Rob's sketchbooks are where he enjoys making art for the fun of it

"On the rare occasion that I'm not working, I have to decide how to use my time to be as constructive as possible. I either look at new software or I treat myself to a week of pissing about on a new sketchbook page.

Drawing is the complete opposite to any work that I do for film. I give myself the absolute freedom to draw whatever I fancy, and aside from wanting to post the work online I have no pressure from a deadline. In addition, my work in film rarely calls for me to be humorous, so it's also a chance to wheel out that aspect of my character.

For years it was the last bastion of natural media in my work (I switched to digital about 20 years ago), but eventually I just decided to dump my pencils and create the pages digitally, because the main point of doing them is to relax and to enjoy myself. I love the added freedom that doing them in Photoshop gives me. Photoshop also enables me to go full colour (occasionally, mind)."

SKETCH 1
Though his free time is scarce these days, Rob likes nothing more than to sketch out ideas as they come to mind.
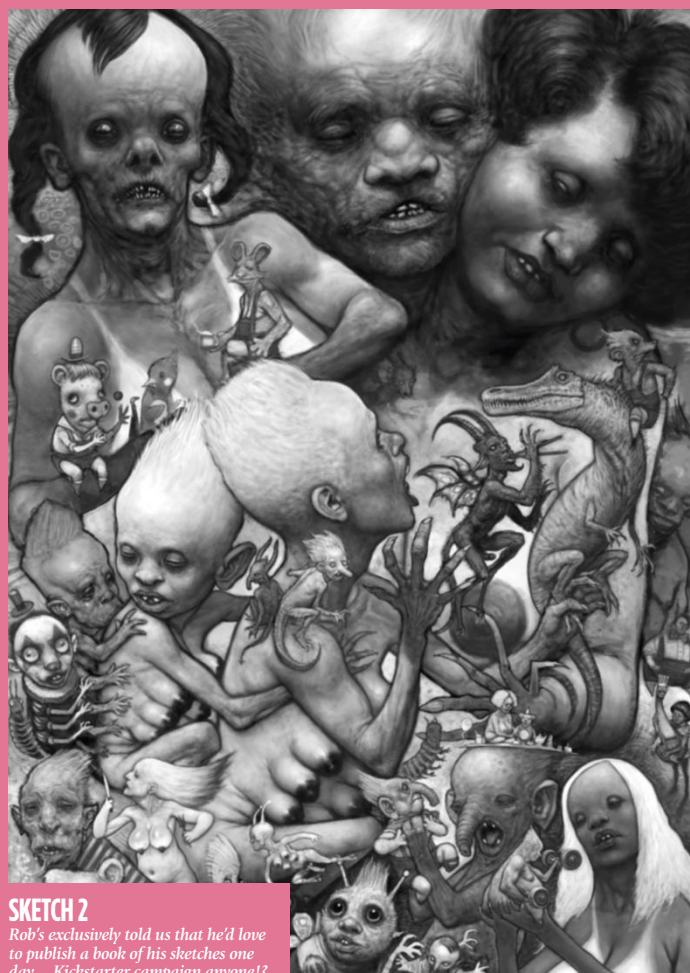
SKETCH 2
Rob's exclusively told us that he'd love to publish a book of his sketches one day… Kickstarter campaign anyone!?

Rob had made some great friends there, but constantly being skint and living off Pot Noodle was taking its toll. So he went for "the Holy Grail: DC covers." This somehow segued into a stint at Magic: The Gathering, which ran its course due to wildly different interpretations of Rob's art. "They thought I was drawing willies in everything, so my sketches had to be vetted for phalluses. Apparently, I had some complaints from parents."

By the late 1990s Rob was in his early 30s, working for a computer firm that's "not worth talking about," not knowing what his next move was. Close to where he was based in London's Camden were the Jim Henson Studios, which also housed the Hallmark Film offices. But history was repeating itself, notes Robs. "It was that theme again: how do get through this wall and get to show my work to the person inside? How do I get past the gatekeepers?"

So he printed his portfolio, went into the building and left it in Henson's art director's pigeon-hole. ""I got a call within a day," he says. "I worked briefly for Henson (Flintstones 2 and an early stab at The Water Horse), and this lead to me working on Hallmark's TV films. That's the first time I had the chance to properly make friends with Dermot Power and Glyn Dillon."

THE CALL OF THE SMALL SCREEN

Dermot had his own 2000 AD battle scars, but Glyn was of Deadline comics pedigree, which had released Tank Girl. "They were the guys at comic conventions smoking cigars wearing sunglasses indoors, and we were the ones with flies buzzing around our heads trying to hang out with ➤➤

GRIM FAIRY TALES
Another worked-up character design for Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. Rob certainly puts the 'uh!' in ugly.

GIANT STEPS
Another monstrous character concept for Jack the Giant Slayer
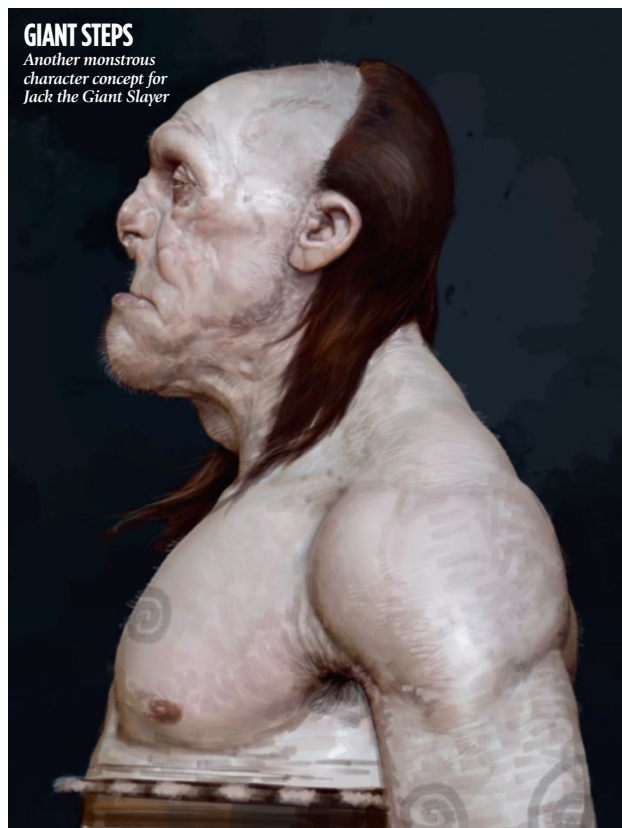
➤ Bisley," Rob recalls. Soon they'd all be working together on TV series like Arabian Nights (2000), Jason and the Argonauts (2000) and an early version of James Gurney's Dinotopia, that eventually got canned.

DIGITAL THEN AND NOW

With a forward-thinking production department, Macs were soon brought in, and Photoshop installed. Rob had worked on the program before Wacom tablets were around, but when they arrived, "it took a week to adjust and then we didn't look back".

He also started experimenting with 3D in the early 2000s (toiling for hours in Maya to create results that he can achieve in minutes today in ZBrush), a move that he suggests all concept artists today should consider. "You've got to make yourself competitive, so learn 3D even if you're a 2D artist."

It's a risk, says Rob, that some younger artists who want to get into the concept art industry forget their main function. "The first service you're providing is a picture that people who

HANGING AROUND
An atmospheric concept piece for a particularly gruesome scene in The Legend of Tarzan (2016).

can't draw, or don't have time to draw, can look at. So it needs to be clear enough that they all know what they're looking at, and they can say what they do and don't like about it."

There's no concept artist cutout that people should emulate, he stresses. Working hard and expanding your skills is a given, but if you're looking for anything more than that, Rob can't help you.

"I never got into art wanting to be a consummate professional," he says. "The idea of talking to youngsters and telling them they must supply X, Y and Z in a responsible manner for the client… well, that's not the sort of

advice I'd give them – even though it might be good advice," he adds. "I don't want a generation of butlers coming up. I want a bunch of ballsy but polite, passionate young people who really, really enjoy the design process to enter film, and to try and push back against the inevitable fight between the artist and the business side."

HARRY POTTER AND THE IDEA BOSS

From Rob's first big film Lara Croft (2001), to his successful run working on the Harry Potter franchise, the artist has had his fair share of run-ins with the "business side" of things. Though not keen to dwell on the

> ❝ I want ballsy but polite, passionate young people who enjoy the design process… ❞

MODO JAZZ HANDS
Although slightly tweaked for the film, this pre-production piece shows how much time and effort Rob puts into his concepts.

BOYS IN THE BAND

For this concept, Rob fired up Modo and ZBrush, whacked on the trad jazz records, and got into a speakeasy frame of mind…

"I've singled out this band shot to talk about as I have happy memories of the process involved. It was made for Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them and was part of the scene set in the Blind Pig speakeasy. It's made entirely in ZBrush and Modo.

The idea of the jazz band came from visual effects artist Christian Manz during a conversation during preproduction. I bashed out a couple of drawings in Photoshop, then moved into ZBrush to flesh out members of the band. The stage furniture and instruments were modelled and textured in Modo.

Anyone who has taken up 3D software as a tool knows that 2D sketches will only get you so far before you feel like you're either treading water or chasing your tail. Working in 3D helps me understand whatever I'm trying to create, and I find jumping into Modo or ZBrush irresistible at a very early stage. Looking around for a 3D asset is far more useful than staring at a sketch.

This image is also of interest because the band differs in some ways from the one that made it into the film. The band eventually evolved into being three male goblins and a human double bassist backing a female goblin singer, but at this stage it was four male goblins. It shows a point in time during the preproduction process."

BAD DOBBY!
One of the many enduring characters of the Harry Potter franchise, Dobby (voiced in the films by Toby Jones) shows off a gentler side to Rob's concept art.

"controlling, incredibly ungenerous" people he's encountered, he's happy to share the flip side of the film experience. "For me, working with Stuart Craig – the production designer for all the Potter films – was like working with David Attenborough. The thing that makes the difference is that he genuinely enjoys the process of designing something."

Working with someone who knows there's a fair amount of "digging around and being unsuccessful before you hit upon something good," is the goal. Ultimately, Rob advises that "if you're not working for someone you enjoy working for, you'll look back and realise that's when you did all your shit work."

His parting advice is that as long as you're creating art for the sake of creating art, you're on to a winner. "I think going back to the beginning of our conversation, just like in school, I've always enjoyed sitting there drawing and painting. It's as much about keeping myself occupied as anything else. It's not necessarily about the end result. It's just about the doing of it, you know?"

NEITHER FISH NOR FOUL
Whether it's this dragon from Fantastic Beasts or the eponymous king of Kong: Skull Island, Rob is adept at depicting believable creatures.

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August 2018
Become a manga superstar with the help of the pros, including Toni Infante and the artists from Collateral Damage Studios. We explore Paul Kwon's workspace, talk to Valentina Remenar and explore Copic marker techniques.

Issue 162
July 2018
Learn the skills to need to give your art extra impact, include 3D sculpting, working in VR, lighting and anatomy advice, creating a 3D scene ready for a paint-over, and more. Plus, 15 pro tips to boost your motivation levels.

Issue 161
June 2018
Discover how to turn abstract ideas into strong character art, and be inspired by a surreal art master. We talk to artists on how they balance work and social media, and Allen Williams reveals his graphite masterpieces.

Issue 160
May 2018
Comic artists assemble within this month's issue! We speak to Ken Lashley and Tony S Daniel, reveal how to draw expressive faces for your panel art, and then colour it effectively. Plus, how to beat back negative thoughts.

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Issue 154
December 2017

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November 2017

Issue 152
October 2017

Issue 151
September 2017

Issue 150
August 2017

Issue 149
July 2017

Issue 148
June 2017

*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.

Sketchbook

Trent Kaniuga

The veteran concept artist takes us through his ideations for games, personal speed sketches and impractical collection of battle axes

Artist PROFILE

Trent Kaniuga
LOCATION: US

Trent's 25-year art career began in comics on the self-published Creed, before he moved to Marvel to work on Ghost Rider and Marvel Knights. He then became a video game concept artist, and spent time at Capcom (Final Fight: Streetwise), Blizzard (World of Warcraft expansions and Diablo 3) and Riot Games (Summoner's Rift). Now he runs Aquatic Moon, an independent visual studio that he founded on 2013.
www.artstation.com/trentkaniuga

League of Legends art © Riot Entertainment

ITEMS FLOAT MAGICALLY

MAGE SHOPKEEPER
"Blue-sky sketching for a shop in Summoner's Rift. I wanted to draw a magical creature that wasn't a Yordle."

> " I was inspired by JJ Abrams' use of so-called mystery boxes "

Trent '17

HEAVY CYBORG
"This was commissioned by Wacom to showcase its tablet technology. I mixed the Metal Gear design ethic with oversized proportions."
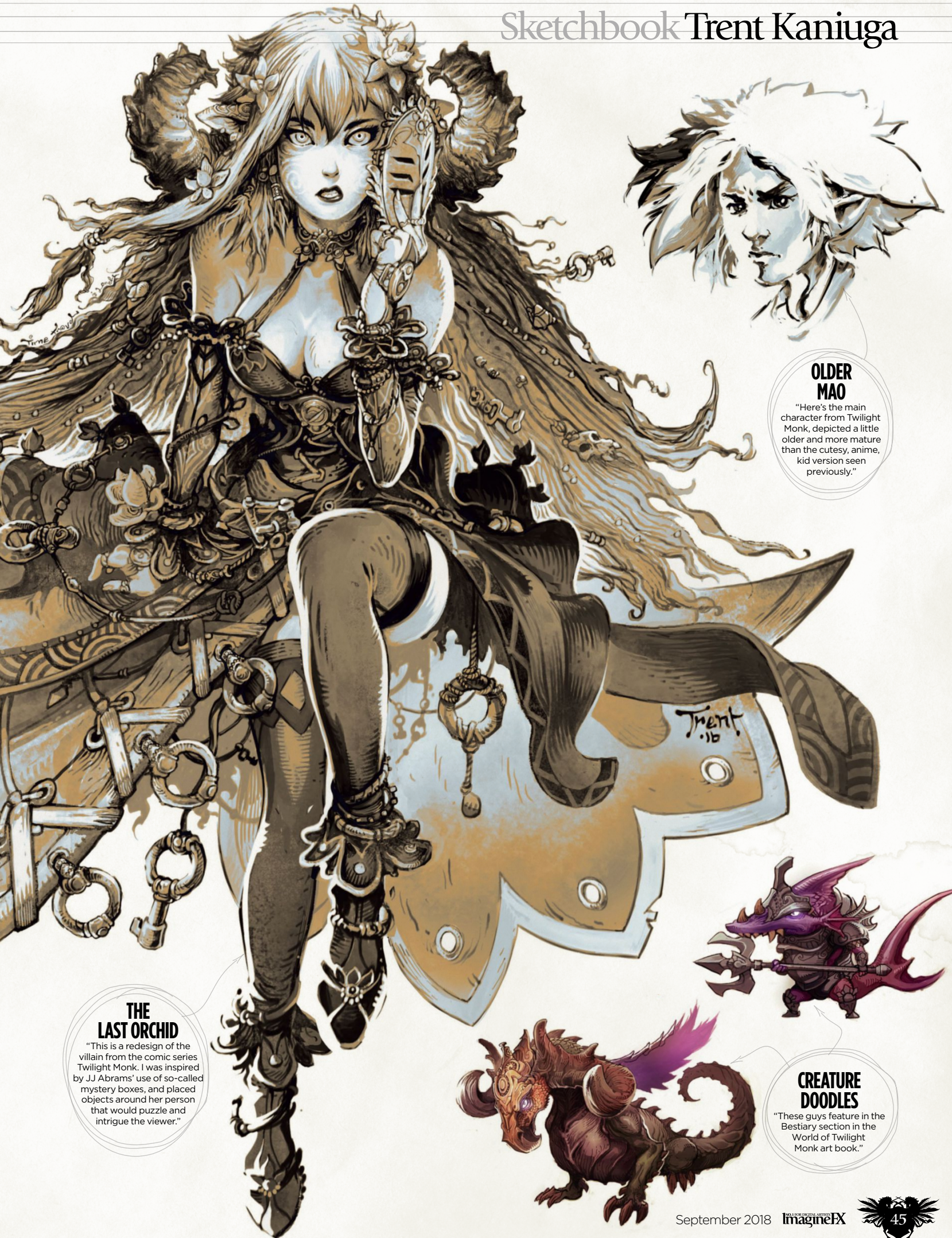
OLDER MAO
"Here's the main character from Twilight Monk, depicted a little older and more mature than the cutesy, anime, kid version seen previously."

THE LAST ORCHID
"This is a redesign of the villain from the comic series Twilight Monk. I was inspired by JJ Abrams' use of so-called mystery boxes, and placed objects around her person that would puzzle and intrigue the viewer."

CREATURE DOODLES
"These guys feature in the Bestiary section in the World of Twilight Monk art book."

SHOPKEEPER
"A rejected concept from Summoner's Rift. I thought putting underwear on his head was interesting. Apparently, not interesting enough."

SAMURAI WARRIOR
"I wanted to create a painting in the Japanese Sumi-e style, and then integrate mechanical cyberpunk elements."
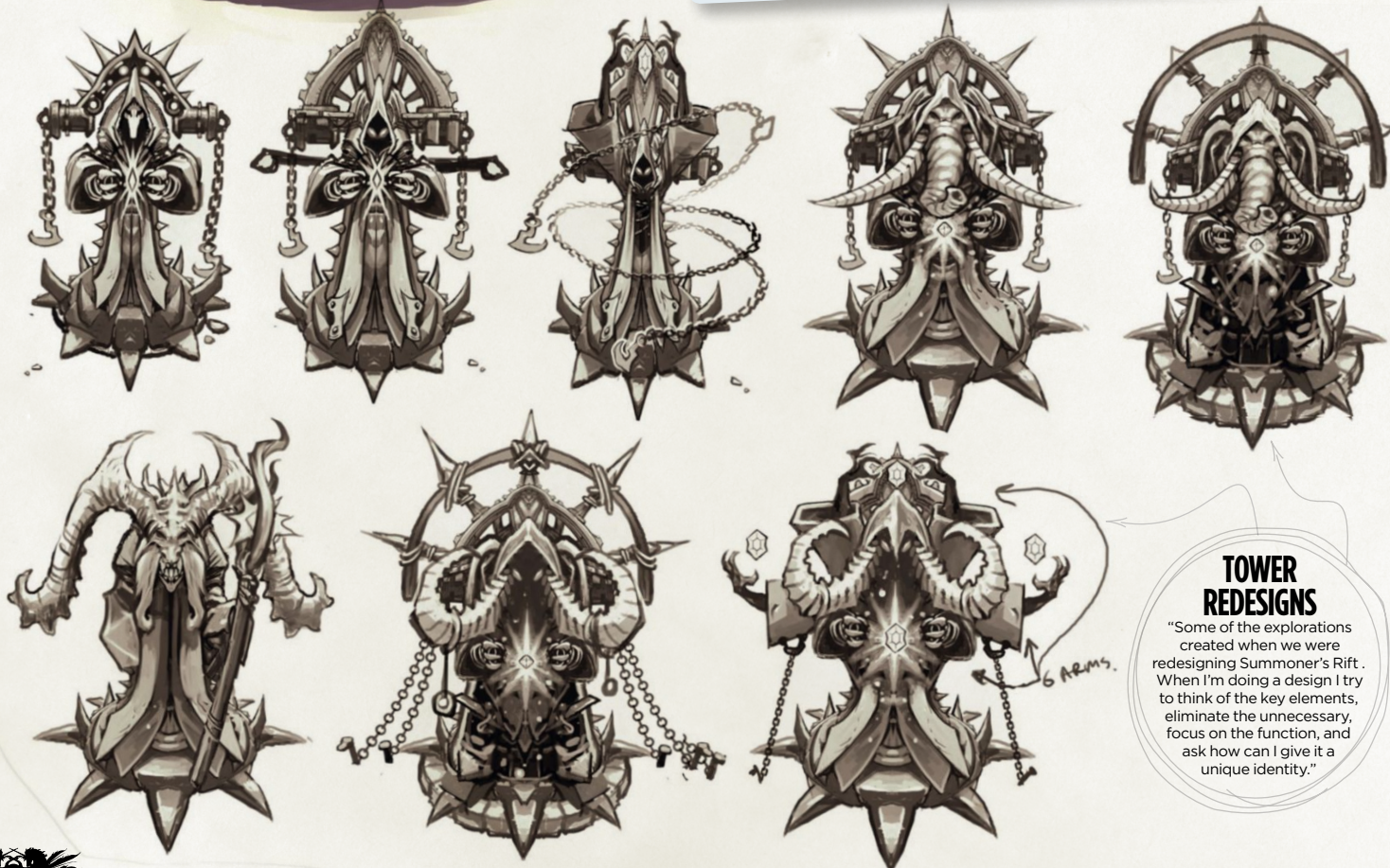
TOWER REDESIGNS
"Some of the explorations created when we were redesigning Summoner's Rift . When I'm doing a design I try to think of the key elements, eliminate the unnecessary, focus on the function, and ask how can I give it a unique identity."

6 ARMS.

CYPERPUNK NINJA KID
"A loose, 30-minute sketch, channelling urban hip-hop into this character's design."

LEONARDO
"Here's a little-known fact before you email me: originally the Ninja Turtles all wore red headbands. I've gotten into some debates about this."

AXES 1
"For a period of time I was sponsored by Autodesk to showcase SketchBook Pro's toolsets..."

AXES 2
"...so I created these axes for a tutorial, based on the look of World of Warcraft. Designing weapons is all about where you place clusters of details..."

AXES 3
"... and how the function works. Clearly the heavier ones would have to be redesigned, as would this one, which has a blade built in the handle!"

GORDON FREEMAN
"I redesigned the lead character from Half-Life as a portfolio piece when I was applying to work at Valve. No joy, sadly."

METAL GEAR FIRE TROOPER
"I'm a big Metal Gear fan so I wanted to redesign some characters from older instalments of the series."

DREADS

AIR FILTER

ALT MASK

FUEL TANK

WHITE CAMO.
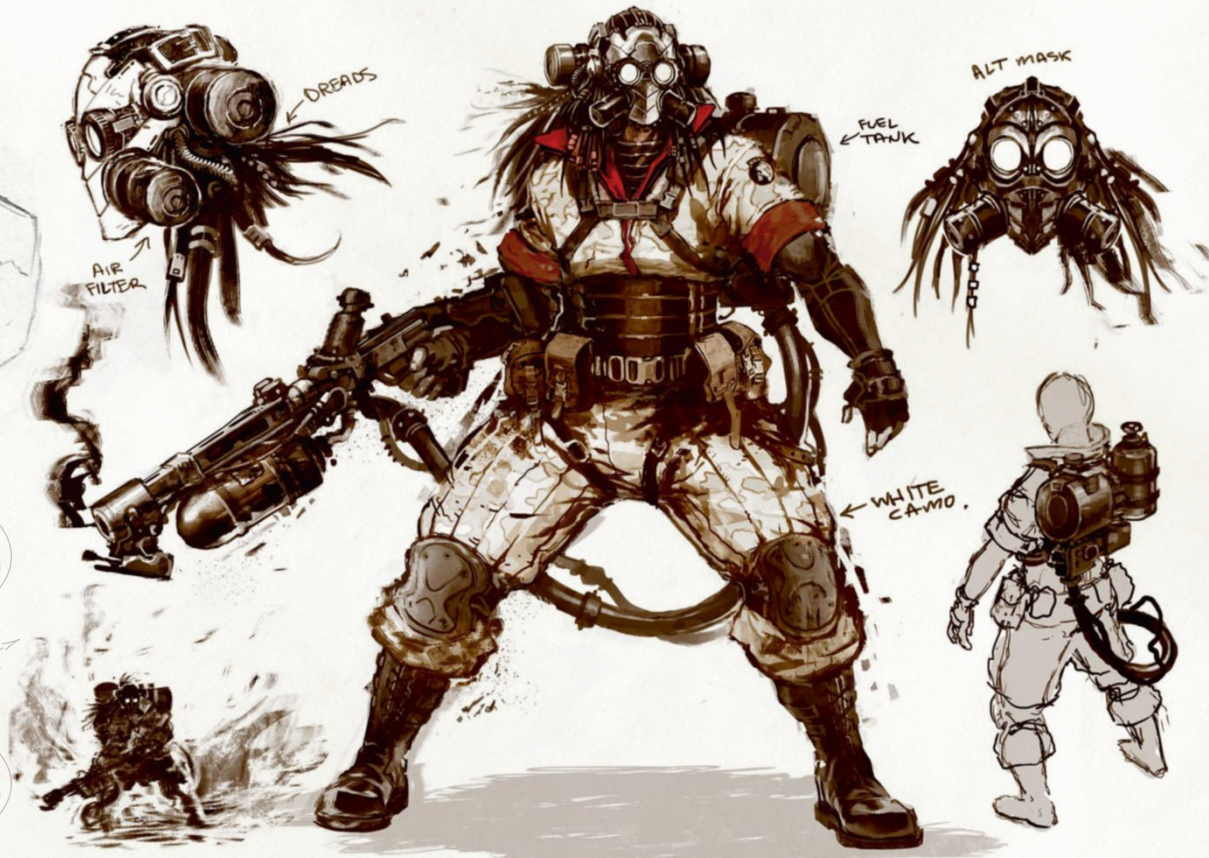
66 Designing weapons is all about where you place clusters of details… 99

SAMUS ARAN
"Metroid is a legendary game and I used SketchBook Pro's brushes to capture the feeling of these alien tendrils chasing after Samus, who's in a very sleek, energised running pose."

Trent. 17
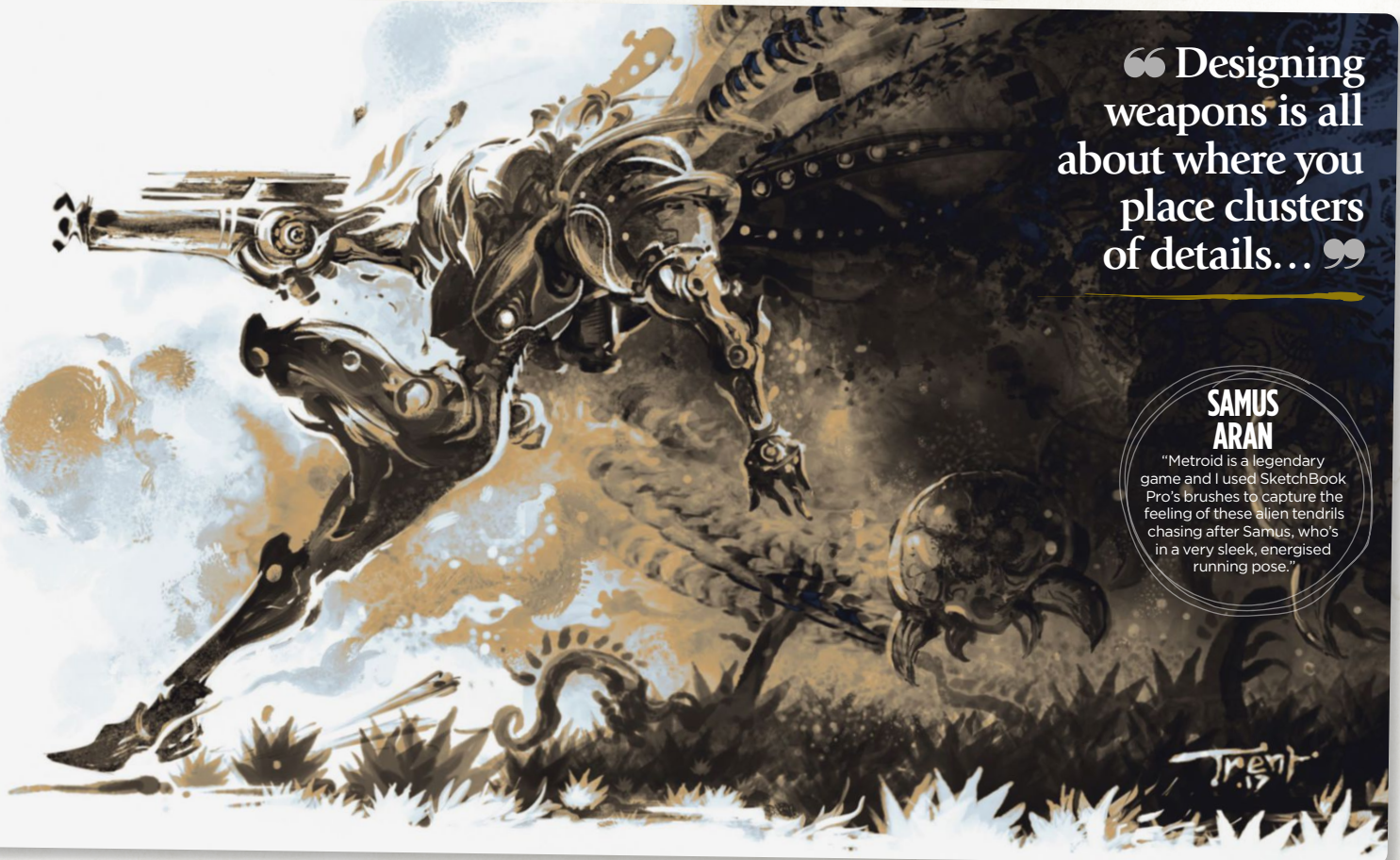
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VIDEO WORKSHOP

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Workshops

Advice from the world's best artists

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58

68

82

This issue:

CAPTURING LIGHT IN A PORTRAIT

As he paints an ethereal portrait piece, **Simon Goinard** reveals his techniques for using light to capture volume and shapes effectively

Artist
PROFILE
Simon Goinard
LOCATION: Canada

The visual development artist hails from Brittany, France, but now lives in Canada. His 70-strong client list includes 20th Century Fox, NBC, BBC, Applibot Inc., The Walt Disney Company and Aston Martin.
www.simongoinard.com

This workshop will reveal how I design most of the lighting in my character designs. Then I'll explain my approach to balancing shapes and introducing an impressionistic mood with two basic Photoshop brushes.

I'll also cover the idea often depicted by Hans Holbein: that adding or changing a tiny detail in a portrait can make a significant difference to the mood in the piece. Finally, I'll attempt to demonstrate the simultaneous contrast effect. This is when two colours that are placed alongside each other appear differently, depending on which colours are used and what they're adjacent to. By the end of this workshop you'll be aware of what to look out for during the different stages of the painting process when designing an original character.

Finally, bear in mind that this workshop is based my commission to paint this issue's cover art. This means that I've had to adapt the sketch and colours palette to the specific art direction and feedback given by the ImagineFX team. However, this doesn't change anything regarding my regular approach to my work, which is the main thing that I want to try to explain across the next few pages!

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!
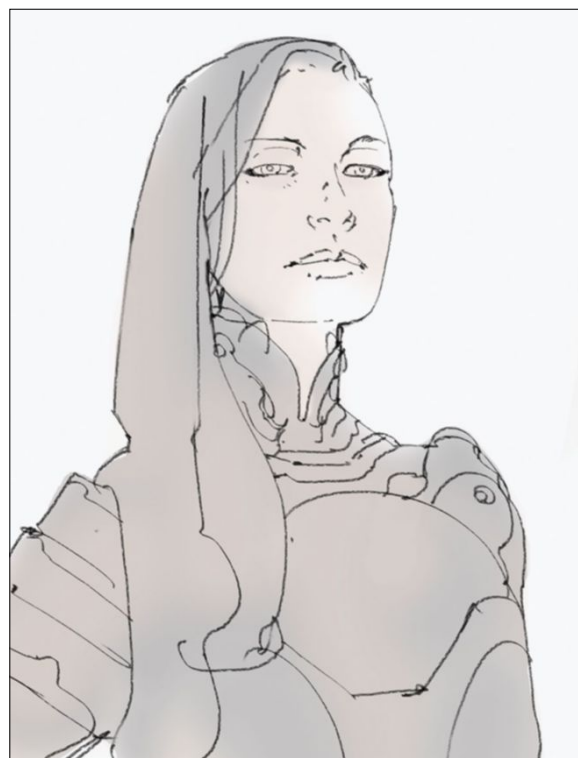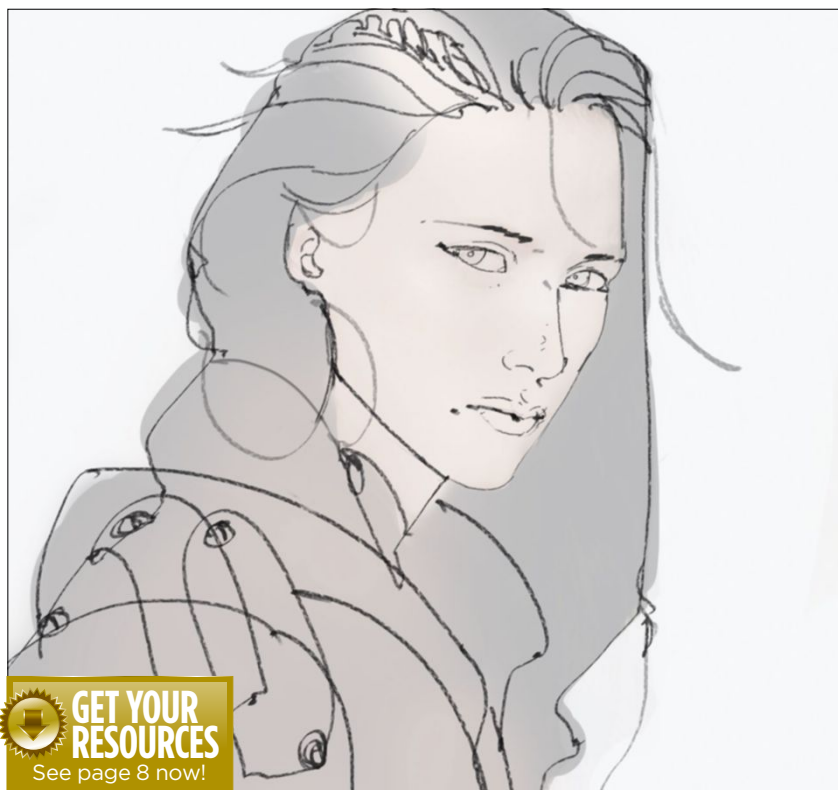
1 Take the correct approach when sketching a portrait
I always start the sketching process of a character with a vertical composition. It's a basic rule that people tend to forget. Don't work from a horizontal or a random frame for a portrait composition. It has to look like a portrait. Each limb of the human body is longer than it is wider, and so the composition will always look better when you take a vertical approach to the assignment.

2 Basic drawing intention
There's a hierarchy of thoughts to consider for a portrait, if you want to bring more than just a depiction of a subject – even if it's fictional. You have to think about the mood of the piece you're trying to convey. When you have something in mind, the next steps involve developing a theme and a pose that could work with this mood. ➤➤

Workshops
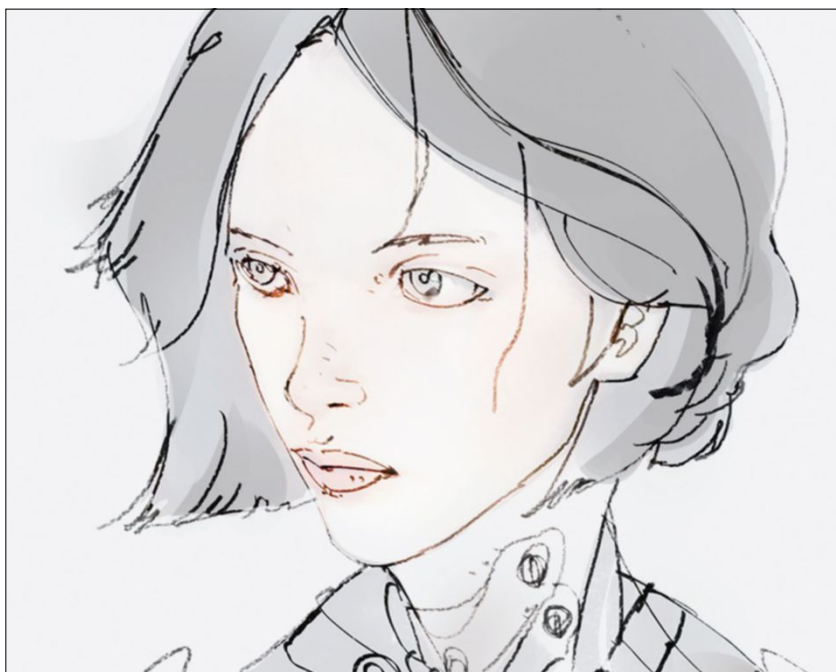
3 Validation of the sketch
Once you've decided on the mood, pose and theme of the piece, you need a strong design. At this point – and depending on your skill level – this stage could either require more than one iteration, or a second drawing layer on top of the first one to clean and refine the design you're developing. It's entirely up to you. After this stage, though, you should be ready to start painting.
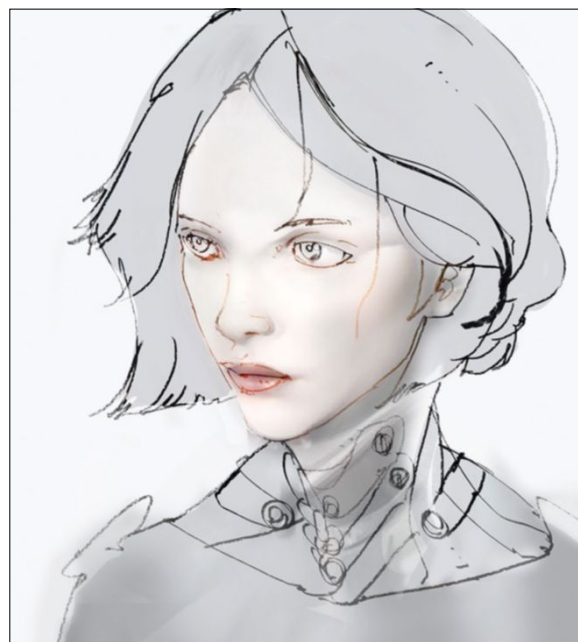
4 Greyscale approach
Now that you (or your client) have explored the portrait idea and have agreed to move forward with one of the iterations, the next step is building up the volumes. A basic grey or clear colour layer should be applied to determine the high and low values you'll have to produce for the portrait. It's the start of the "shades" approach.
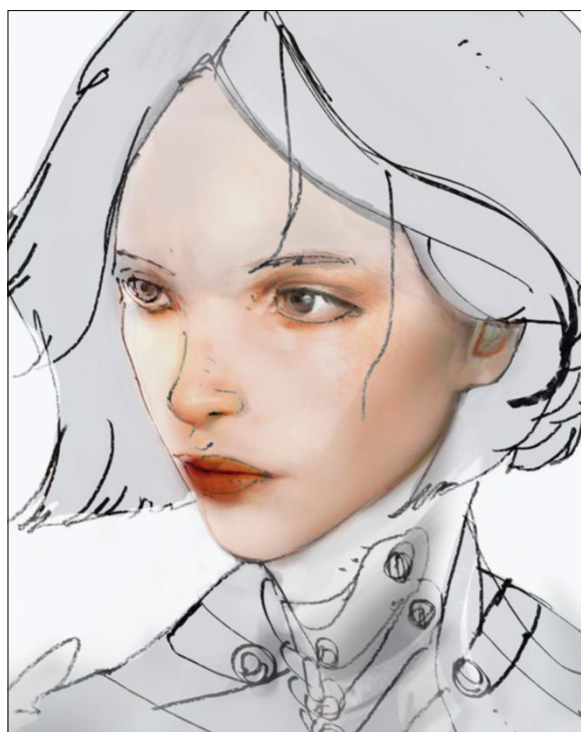
5 Increase intensity of shading
This stage can be done either in black and white, or in colour if you're a more experienced artist. The idea behind this step is to enhance the previous shades with greater intensity and contrasts. Here, I've chosen to start directly with colour. You can see that I only focus on the character's face at this point.
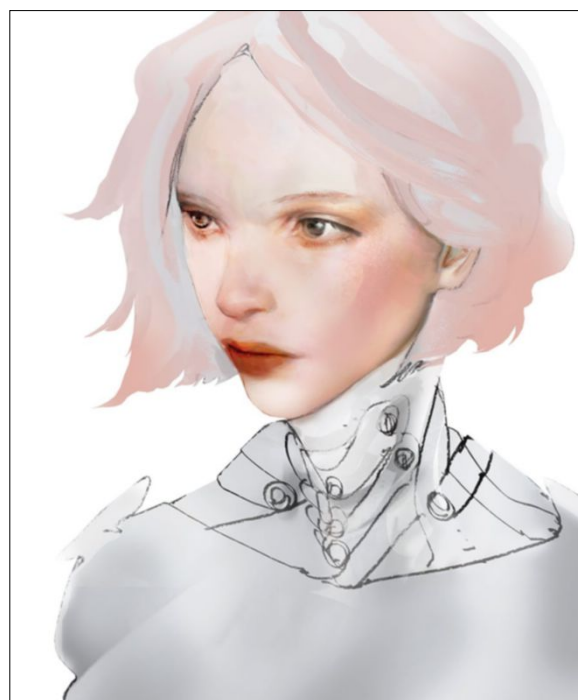
6 Maintain the mood
This is the second phase of the shading process, where you define the subject even more sharply. This step could also be where you'd bring back colours if you only worked in black and white previously. The key part of this phase is to bring in or maintain the mood you decided on at the start of the sketch stage. It's important to stay true to your core ideas, even if the design changes slightly.
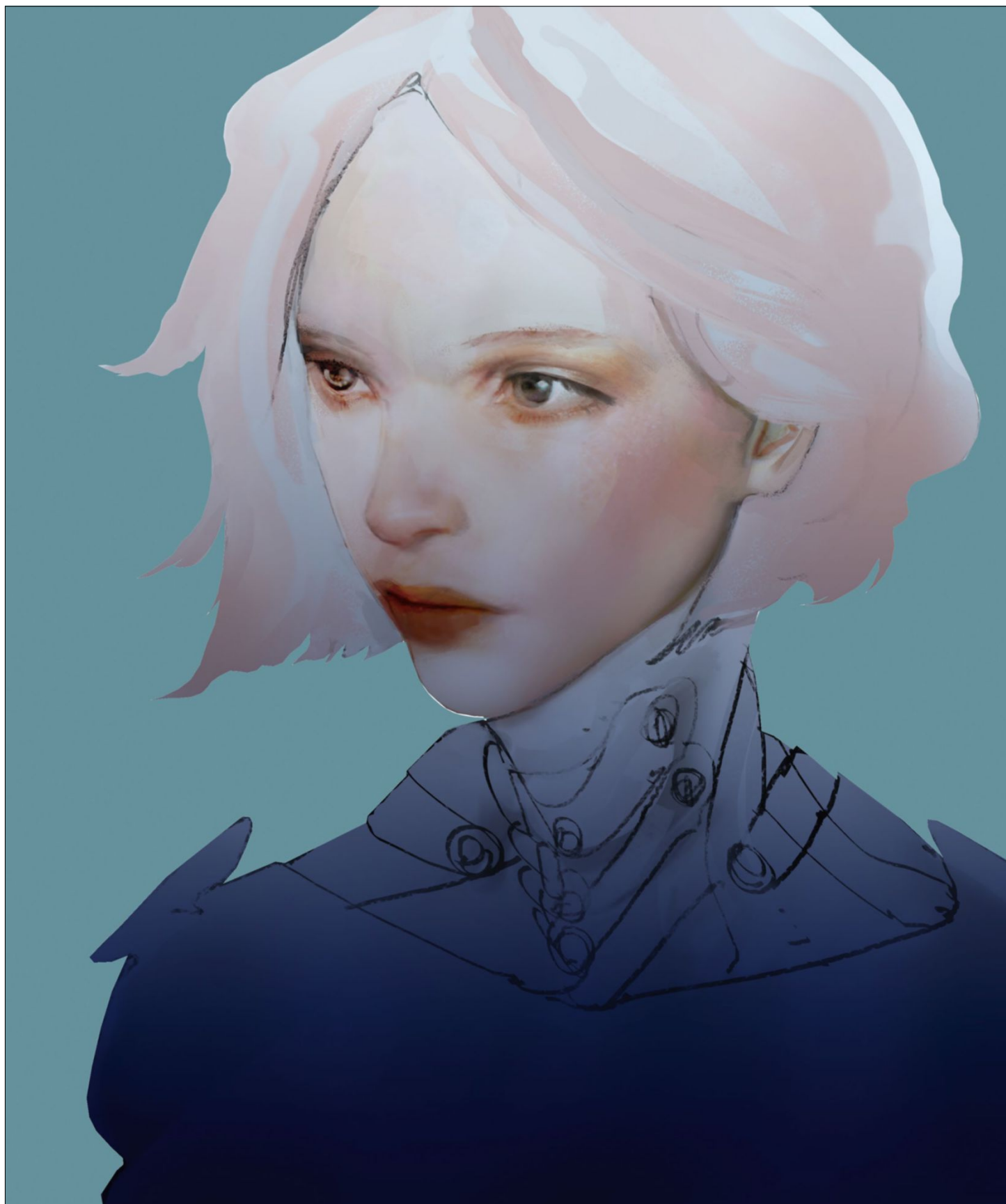
7 **Masking ensures your work has clean edges early on**

This is a straightforward technical step that helps you work faster later on in the painting process. Masking or making cutouts (isolated parts) of your painting using the Lasso tool can enable you to skip the clean-up stage later on, and will help you build up levels of light transparency. At the very least I would recommend creating a completely masked version of your portrait (the blue portion seen here). ➤➤
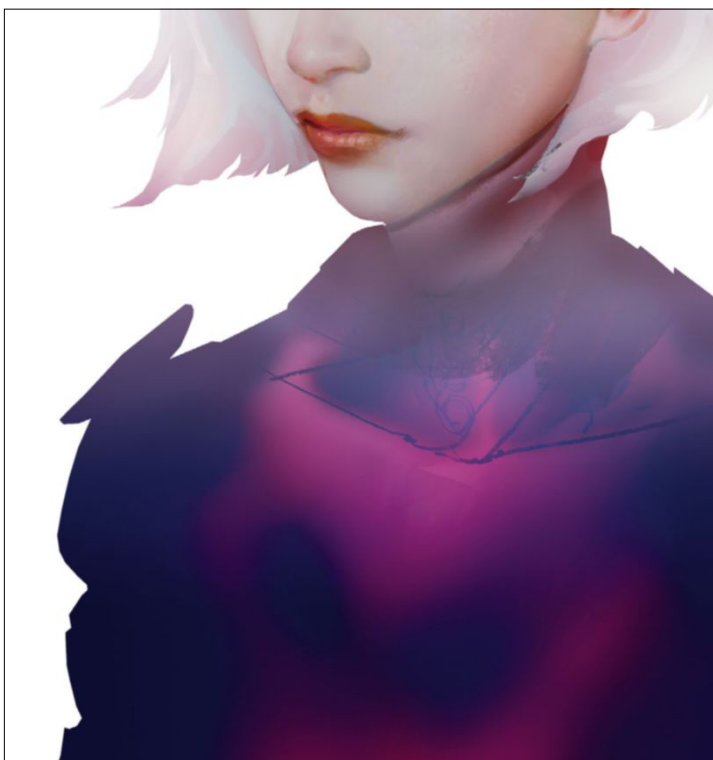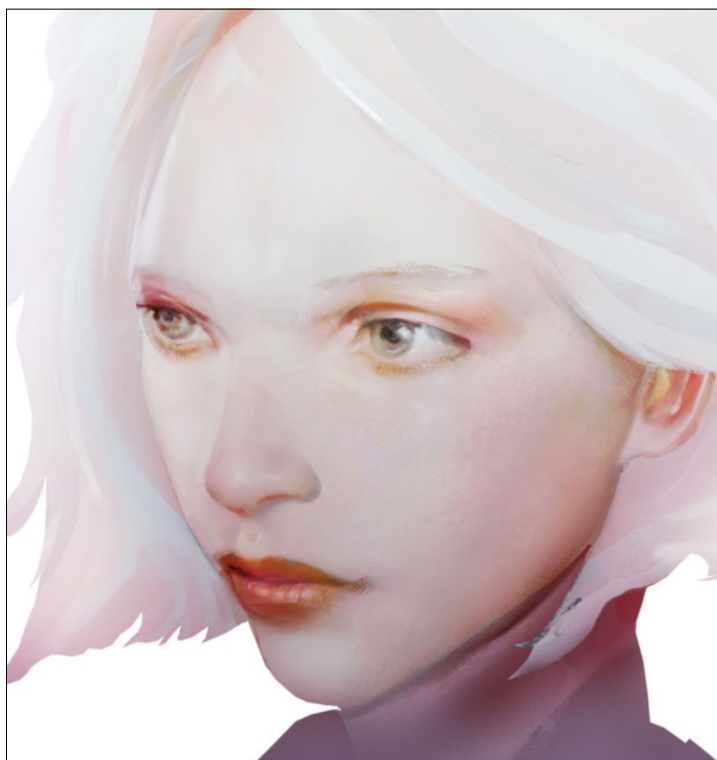
8 Filling in colours, with an eye on simultaneous contrast effect

You now have a well-defined subject and a masked version of your painting. This will make it easier to think about colours. So the next step is to start filling in the remaining parts of your portrait using either the Paint Bucket or Gradient tool, while bearing in mind the principles of simultaneous contrast effect (SCE). As mentioned in my introduction, this is the perfect time to experiment with colour.
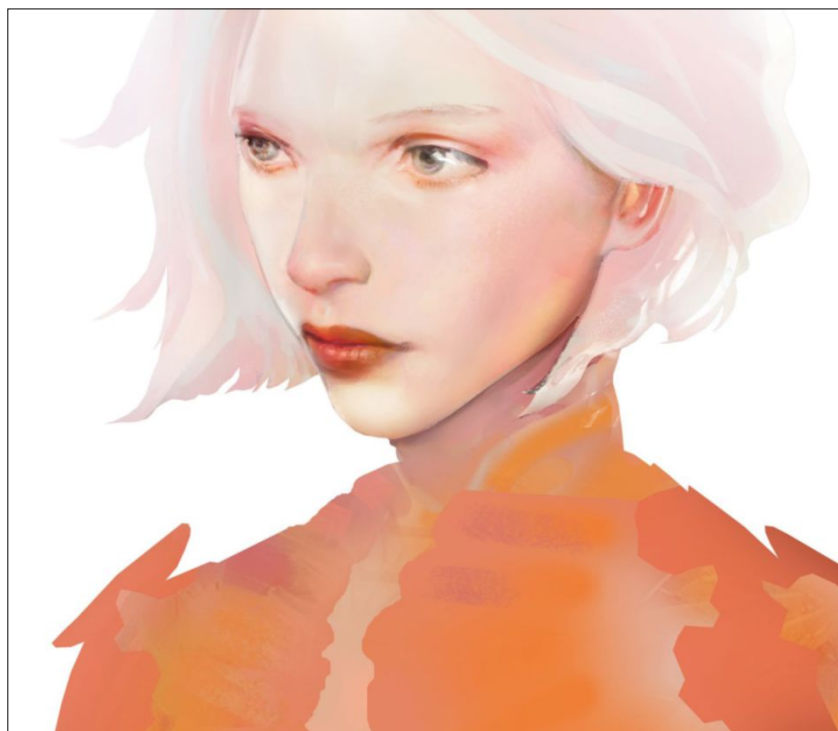
9 Interactions between colours and shapes

With the masks in place you don't need to worry about anything apart from implementing a degree of interaction between colours and the shapes in your design. Secondary colours used between low and high areas of contrasts is one way to exploit the effect of simultaneous contrast, but there are plenty of options available. For example, see what happens when you introduce a strong gradient.
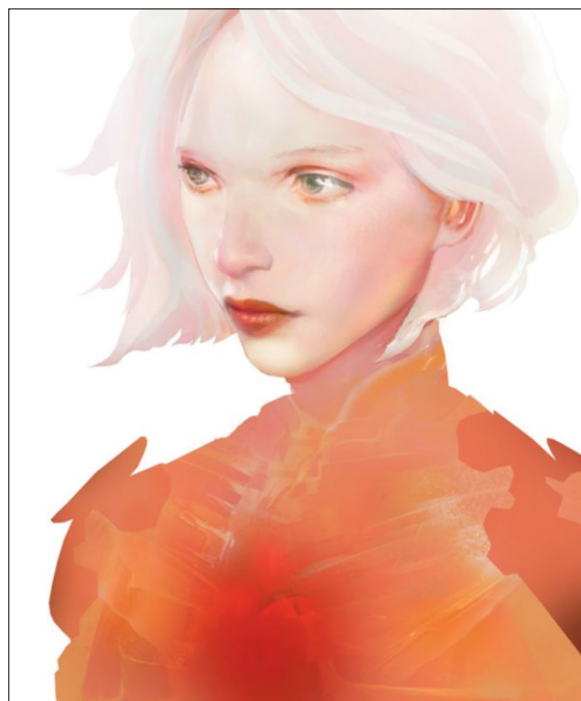
10 Adding greater depth with contrast

At this stage you should have your colour and shape interactions in place. If necessary – and as I've done here – you could produce more masks to bring out even more from the design ideas from your sketch. The next step is to once again portray the high and low contrasts of these newly designed elements.
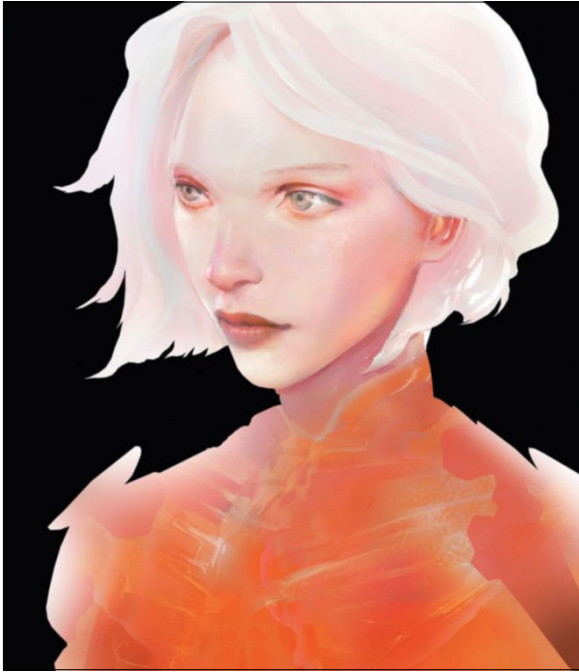
11 New composition possibilities

You should be able to see some details emerge from your design. You may even notice new paths for more intricate light interactions with your character, because of all the new colours and shapes that have been introduced. Now it's time to define the primary main light source for the remaining steps of your painting process.

12 Introduce an impressionistic light

The rendering technique of this light is now the main thing left to determine in the painting. Earlier I mentioned that I was going to show how to produce an impressionistic light. The definition of this light is very precise: it's a bright and vibrant light that looks like it might change at any moment.
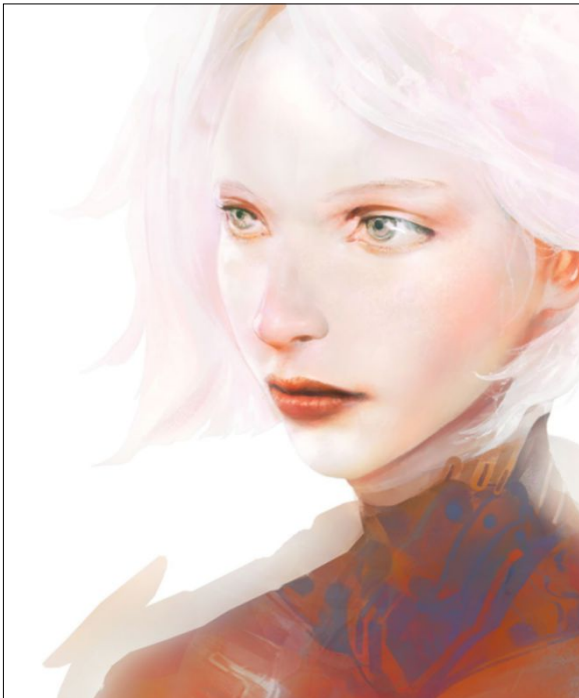
13 Rendering the light

My impressionistic light can be emulated using two default Photoshop brushes. Any smooth brush combined with a grainy brush will do the trick. The external part of the light has to be transparent, while its centre should be very rough. Combining these two styles of brushes in your rendering will enable you to capture this light.
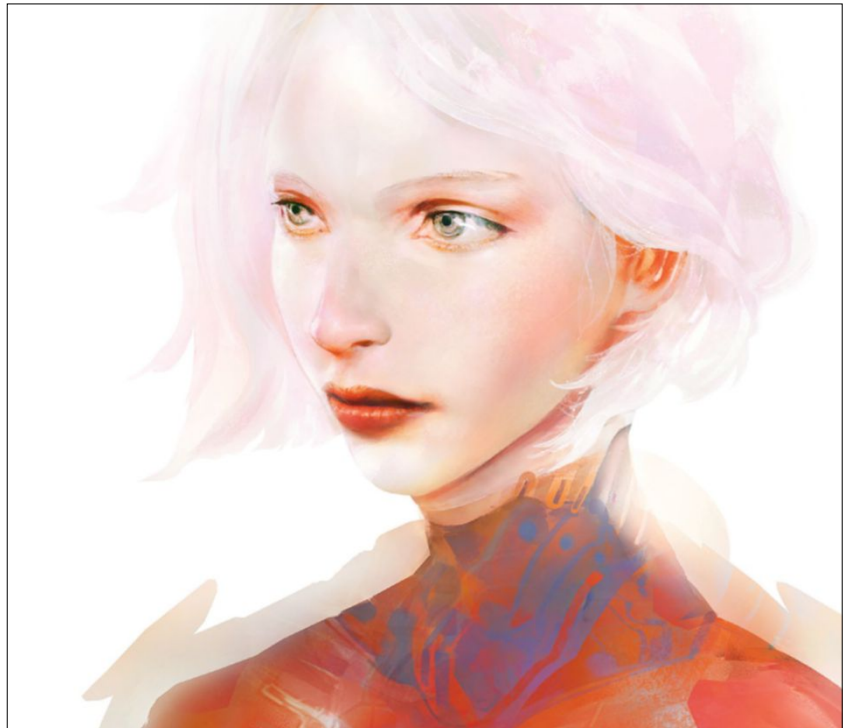
14 Pay attention to those details

All that's really left to do is the detail. The important thing to remember about this stage is the technique that Hans Holbein is known for: modifying very small portions of your character's face one step at a time will help you intensify or reduce the mood of your subject. For this character I've chosen to emulate the Mona Lisa's enigmatic smile to add a degree of softness to her personality.

Quill & Oculus Rift headset

CREATE A LANDSCAPE IN QUILL AND OCULUS

Wielding the painting and animation tool Quill, **Martin Nebelong** shows how he sketches and develops an immersive landscape composition

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Artist PROFILE

Martin Nebelong
LOCATION: Denmark

Martin is a freelance artist with a long-time interest in technology, and virtual reality in particular. He has more than 15 years of experience working with clients all over the world.
https://ifxm.ag/mar-n

In this workshop I'll be painting a landscape scene in virtual reality with Quill. We'll also have some characters in the scene, a dad and his two kids (inspired by my own children) and I'm aiming for a sunset mood. The dad is painting the scenery while his kids are playing.

I've had people ask about the speed of creating a landscape in VR compared to painting a similar scene in Photoshop. You're using the same basic knowledge of colour, composition, line art and so on, so it's easy to compare the two.

Initially things take a bit longer in VR, but imagine having painted one tree in VR with Quill. That tree can be rotated slightly to look like a new tree; branches and leaves can be rearranged; and parts of the tree can be easily recoloured. In just a few minutes, after having painted that first tree, you can have a forest that won't look it's made up of a single tree that's been copy/pasted.

Now consider painting that same tree in Photoshop and then copy/pasting it. You'd have something that's clearly duplicated versions of the first tree, even if you recolour it, move elements around and so on. And that's without taking into consideration the compositional freedom a 3D scene from Quill gives you. Want to see the world from ant view or bird's view? No problem! ➤➤
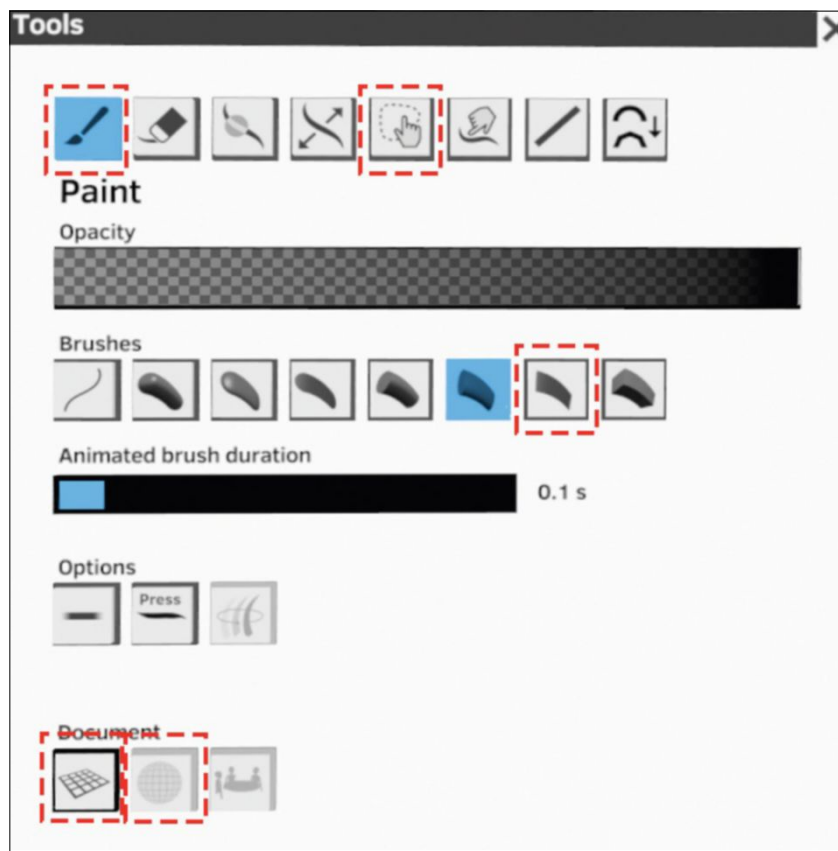
1 Set up the software
Toggle Brush Grid Helper and Toggle Grid Visibility should both be on. Both will help you position elements in the scene. I mostly use the Ribbon tool and the Selection tool during this early phase. You can toggle quickly between your main tool and the Selection tool by pressing the X button on your left controller (A on the right controller if you're left handed). Once you make a selection, you'll see the Transform Gizmo. You might want to turn this off, unless you need to move your selections more precisely. To do this, just push in on the left thumbstick.
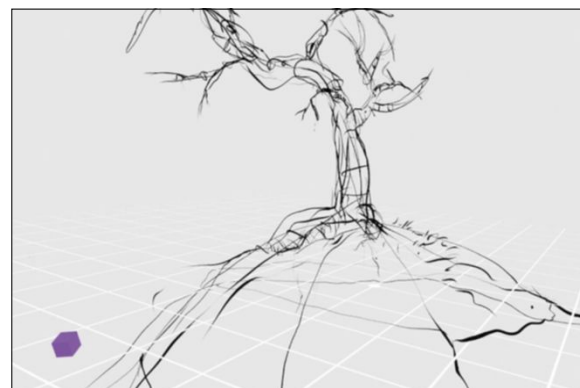
2 Sketching phase
I start sketching using the Ribbon tool. I draw in a wireframe-like manner, and constantly turn the drawing in my hands to make sure it looks good from all sides. I use the scene grid as a base for the tree. This ensures that the scene is correctly aligned if I choose to export the scene to another 3D program. To save time, I select a branch and hold down the left trigger and the right grip button (thumb button) while dragging the selection. This is a quick way to make duplicates.
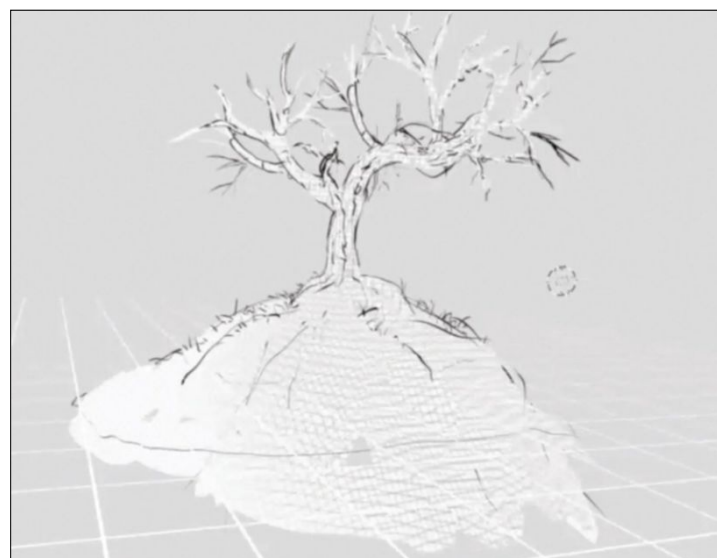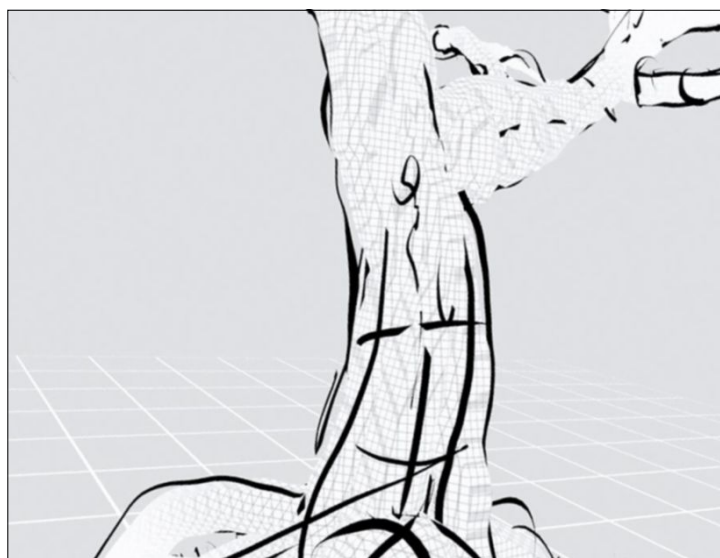
3 Colour fill the tree sketch to better visualise the 3D form
To give me a better understanding of the three-dimensional form of the tree, I make a new layer (either through the menu or by pushing up on the right thumbstick), choose the Capped cylinder brush or the Cylinder brush, change the colour to white and fill out the inside of the tree. Just seeing the elements as a see-through wireframe model can become a bit confusing, especially with more complex drawings. I make sure that Pressure Sensitivity is set to On under the Paint options. This ensures I can quickly match the thickness of the inside stroke to the sketch.
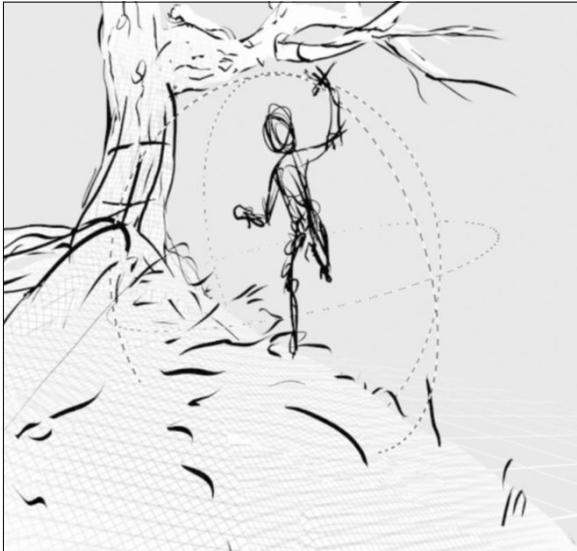
4 Sketching the first character

Now I sketch the first character on a new layer. He's a small boy, running with what will be a paper aeroplane in his hand. I move the character around a bit to find a good spot for him, by switching to the Selection tool (X) and making a quick selection of everything. To adjust the selection, I press the right grip button with my active selection, and drag it around.

5 Adding basic colour to the tree

I switch to the layer with the white fill of the tree, select the Recolor tool and pick a dark brown for the trunk of the tree. I scale the Recolor tool up by pushing up on the right thumbstick, and quickly recolour the trunk. The Recolor tool can be set to be sensitive to pressure, which I have on most of the time. If you need to recolour only a certain part of your layer, make a selection of that part first before painting.
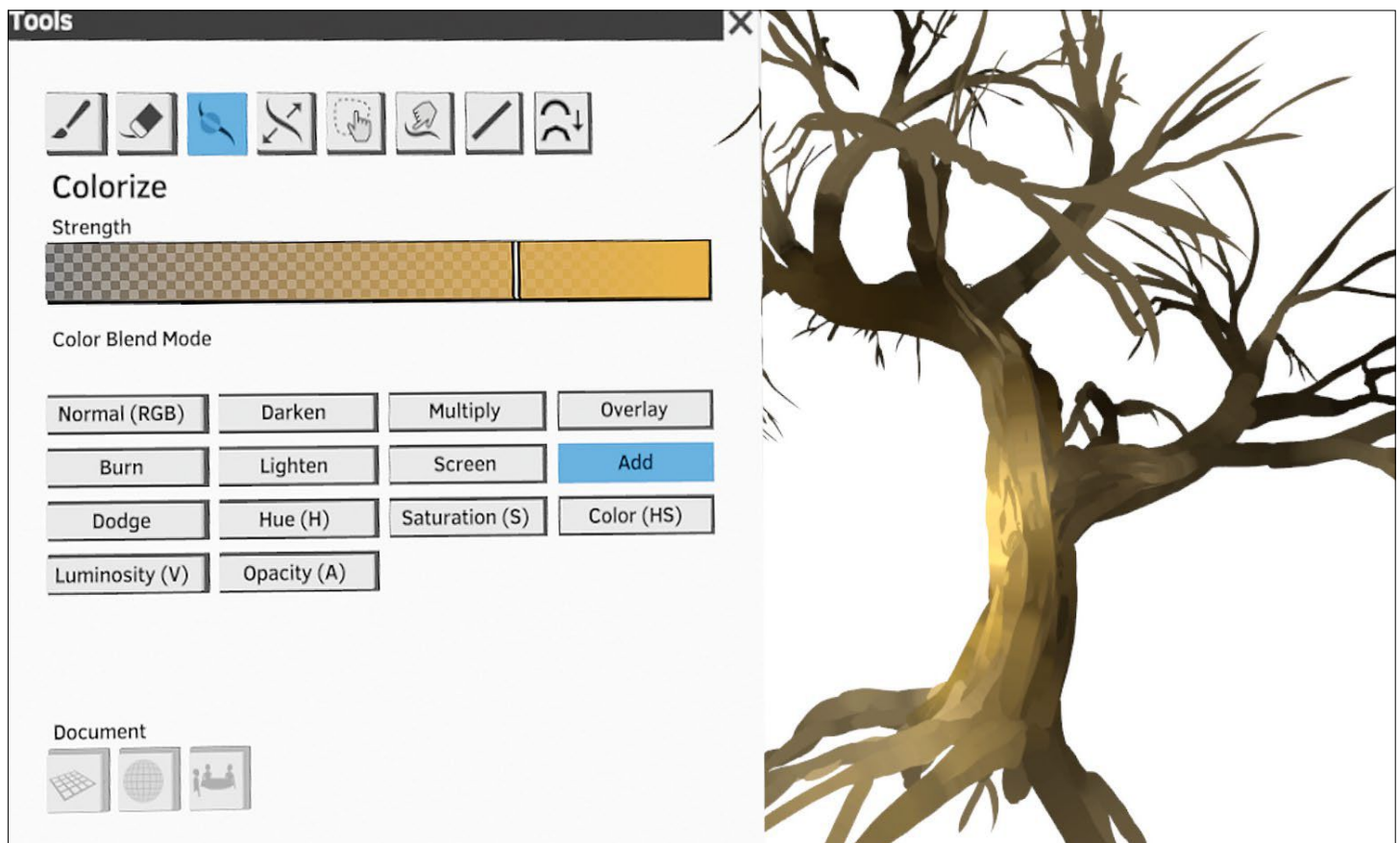
6 Introducing variations in colour

If you're experienced with painting digitally, the Colorize options should feel familiar. Here, I choose Add and paint in some light on the trunk. I also use Multiply in the upper part of the tree, where I know the foliage will occlude the light. The amount and size of the strokes determine how smooth your colours will be. A stroke can only have colour changes along the stroke, not around it. ➤➤

Workshops

7 Rustling up plants and grass

I quickly paint the basic shape of the hilltop using the Ribbon brush. Then I draw some light blades of grass (A). I select those, drag some copies (left trigger+right grip button) (B), then draw a simple weed (C). I combine those (D) and finally I duplicate my grass patch all over the hilltop and add colour variation with the Recolor tool (E). This approach is fast and efficient!
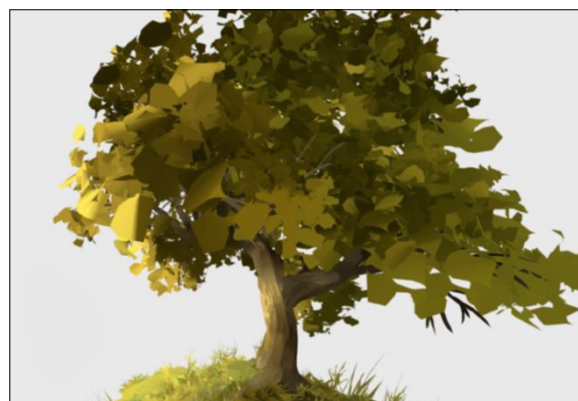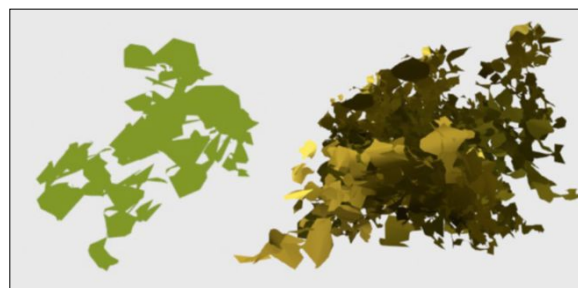
8 Quickly create a tree canopy

First, I draw some leaves using the Ribbon brush. I rotate my brush while drawing, to make sure the leaf part isn't just a flat surface. I copy this patch a few times and recolour. Then finally I copy that part and make sure to rotate and scale copies for variation. I might even go in with the Nudge tool to add even more variation.
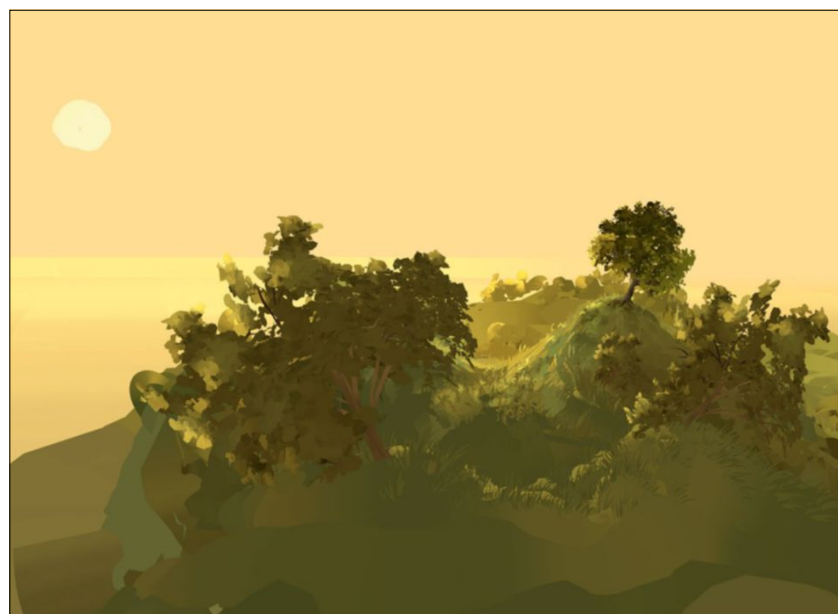
9 Establishing the surroundings

Using the Ribbon tool and the Cabbed cylinder tool, I paint in the landscape. The hilltops and trees close to our main area of focus receive more detail, and I draw in grass and plants using the select/copy method. For the ocean "plate", I draw a line with the Line tool and Ribbon brush flat on the scene grid. I make sure this line aligns to the grid, by rotating it into place using the Transform Gizmo (push in on the left thumbstick). Then I reselect the stroke, move-copy by dragging on the Transform Gizmo, and move the left thumbstick right to repeat the duplication. Repeat until you have a large plane that you can then scale to the right size.

10 Sketching in the other characters

Now that I'm happy with the appearance of my hilltop, it's time to sketch in the other characters. I repeat the process I used for the first figure (step four) and make sure to view the drawing from all sides to avoid the characters tilting to one side. I also fill the family members with white to make them stand out from the surroundings. I use the Line tool to depict the easel.

11 Refining the character sketches

I start refining the first character, and redraw the initial rough sketch just like I would in a traditional drawing. It's still a bit rough, but I'll do the last polish pass during the colouring phase. Again, it's very important to rotate your drawing throughout your painting process, to avoid creating a slanted drawing. Think of this step as making a wireframe model for your painting.
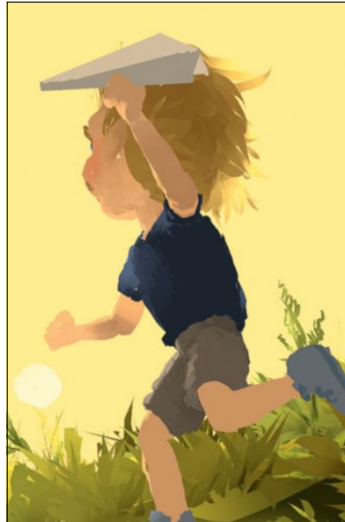
12 Colouring the character

Now that the character is drawn to my liking, I start adding colour. I paint flat Ribbon brush strokes on top of the character frame. Remember that the more strokes we have, the more colour detail and smooth gradients we'll be able to achieve. If you know you want a gradient from top to bottom, make your strokes in that direction rather than horizontally. If you draw them horizontally, you won't be able to generate a smooth gradient from top to bottom.
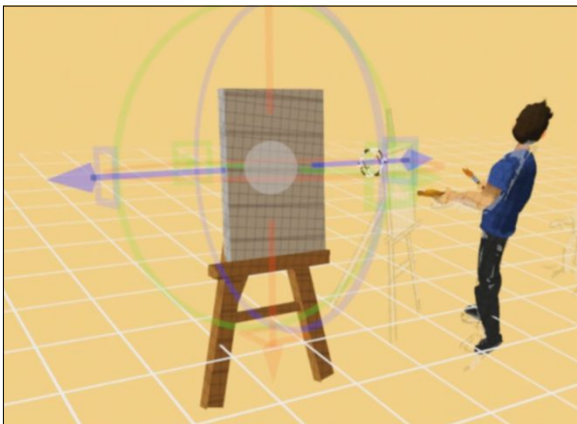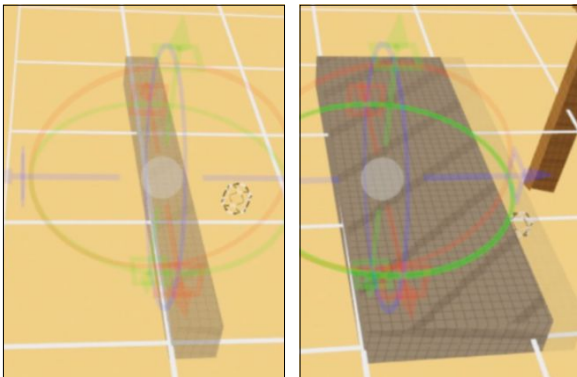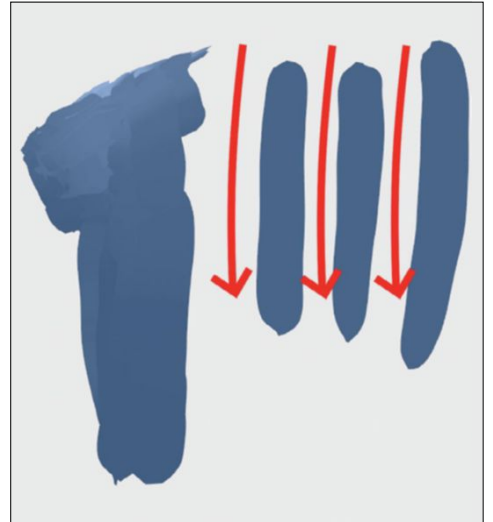
13 Refining the easel and painting

For the easel and canvas, which needs more precision than the previous elements, I turn to the scene grid. I draw the legs of the easel and the canvas using the Cube brush and Line tool. I make sure the lines align to the grid, and use the Transform Gizmo to rotate them into place. I go in and add lights to the sides and back using the Ribbon brush, Line tool and a lighter colour.

14 Painting in the other characters

I paint in the two other characters using the same approach as for the boy. The Selection tool makes it straightforward to repose the characters if necessary. For those two characters, I mostly use the Cabbed Cylinder brush. It's slightly more demanding on system performance compared to the Ribbon brush, but you don't have to be as careful to avoid "holes" between your brushstrokes. Happy Quilling! ●

Core Skills: Part 6
BLEND MODES IN PHOTOSHOP

Mark White looks at how Photoshop can enable you to blend and mix colours and layers together, just with a simple drop-down menu of tools

Artist PROFILE

Mark White
LOCATION: England

Mark is the techniques editor for our sister magazine Photoshop Creative, where he writes tutorials for both Photoshop and Photoshop Elements.
www.be.net/mrkjhnwht

Blending is key for any artist, digital or otherwise. When you add layers into the mix of Photoshop, it becomes easier for you to structure your artwork and blend it with other layers to create more realistic imagery.

The blend modes change how their selected layer reacts with the pixels in the layers below them. They can alter the colour or the tone of your art; they're often used for brightening, darkening, changing

hue or reducing colour, and you can use as many of them in a project as you like.

One of the first things that anyone with Photoshop should do is have a play the program's blend modes. Once you become more seasoned with the program, a knowledge of how to harness blending is vital to improving your digital art skills.

For the sake of consistency, the blend mode examples shown here all have the same solid colour adjustment layer, before going on to explore the effects of the mode.

ORIGINAL IMAGE
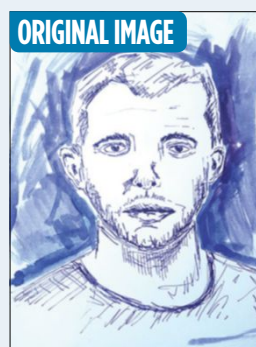
1 Add colours or shadows with darkening blend modes

The first set of blend modes – Darken, Multiply, Color Burn, Linear Burn and Darker Color – are all used to darken your layer in reaction to the layers below. This is good for creating fill layers that are full of colour, or adding shadows to your work.

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MULTIPLY & DARKEN
Multiply (shown here) multiplies the luminosity of lower layers by the blend layer, whereas Darken compares the lower layers and blend layers, and keeps the darkest pixels of the two. These modes are similar, but Darken creates more block colours.

COLOR BURN & LINEAR BURN
Color Burn (see above) creates a darker result than Multiply, because it increases contrast for more saturated midtones. Linear Burn is similar, but it lowers the brightness from your lower layers. These blend modes are similar to using the Burn tool.

DARKER COLOR
Darker Color is similar to Darken. The only difference is that it reacts differently to colour, because Darker Color blends the blend layer's colours into the final result, creating a more saturated finish to your artwork.

2 Increase brightness with the Lighten blend modes

The Lighten blend modes are used to brighten up your artwork a little and add a splash of colour to an already dark canvas. These modes are also particularly good for creating optical effects such as double exposures and light leaks in your artwork.

LIGHTEN & SCREEN
Lighten, as demonstrated above, compares the colours on the layers below and the blend layer colour, and keeps whichever one of the two is the lightest. Screen works in a similar fashion, but it doesn't create such a block colour effect.
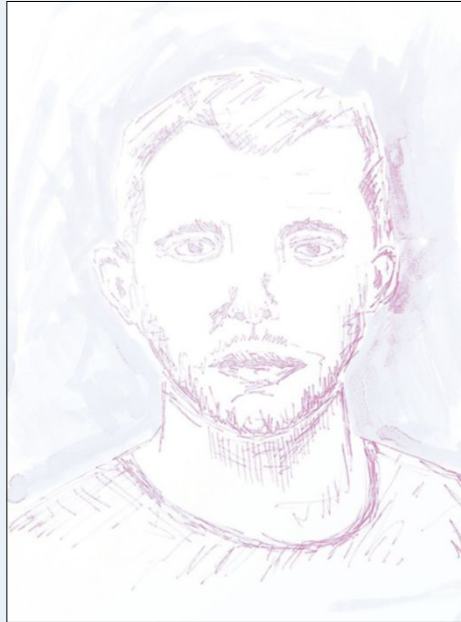
COLOR DODGE & LINEAR DODGE
Color Dodge (above) reduces contrast between the lower layers and the blend layer colours, creating saturated midtones and stronger highlights. It's akin to using the Dodge tool. Linear Dodge is similar to Color Dodge, but creates more dramatic effects.

LIGHTER COLOR
Lighter Color is to Lighten what Darker Color is to Darken. As such, it doesn't blend pixels. It reacts differently to colours, and generates a more saturated finish by comparing the base and blend colours, and then keeping whichever is the brightest.

3 Manage light placement with contrast blend modes

The tonal blend modes can alter the highlights, midtones and shadows all at once. Blend modes such as Overlay and Soft Light can be used to pinpoint the brightness and contrast in various places in your image, and Linear Dodge is good for sharpening, for example.
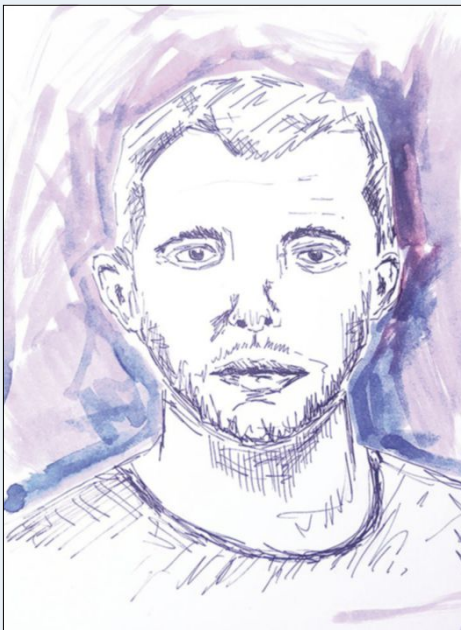
OVERLAY, SOFT LIGHT & VIVID LIGHT
Overlay, Soft Light and Vivid Light have no effect if a layer is filled with neutral grey. Once you add a colour or tone either side of neutral grey, you'll brighten or darken your image. Soft Light does this subtly, Overlay (shown here) achieves it in a harsher way, and Vivid Light pushes the effect still further.
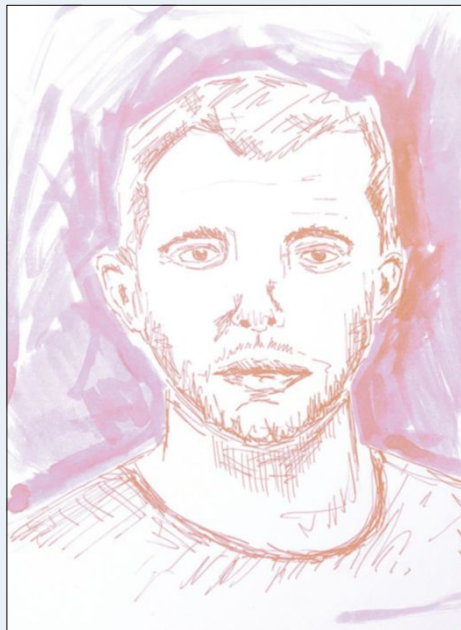
HARD, LINEAR & PIN LIGHT
Hard Light (see above) mixes Screen and Multiply for harsher results compared with Overlay or Soft Light. Linear Light mixes Linear Dodge and Linear Burn depending on whether it's used on darker or lighter pixels. Pin Light mixes Lighten and Darken for dramatic, block colour.
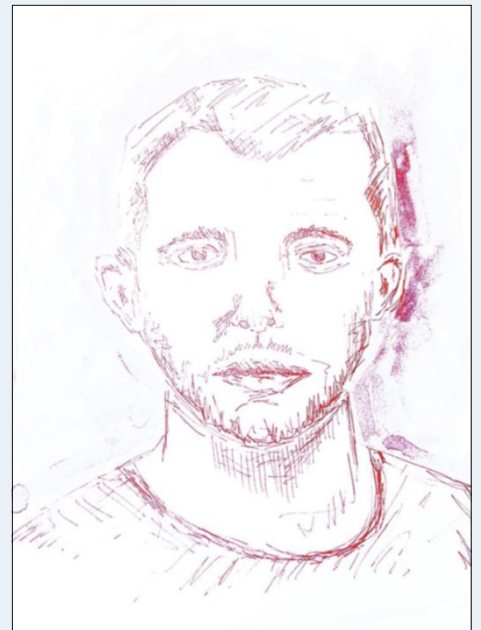
HARD MIX
Hard Mix applies the blend by adding each RGB channel into the blend layer to the corresponding RGB channel in the layers below. The blending mode creates a loss in detail, and the colours can only be black, white, red, green, blue, cyan, magenta or yellow.

4 Reverse out elements in your art with inverting blend modes

The inverting blend modes turn any layers below them into their opposite colour and tone. These are particularly useful for creating non-destructive inversions in your image, especially if you're looking to depict pinpoint effects in specific places.

DIFFERENCE
Difference uses the difference of the lower layers and blend layer's pixels; a fill layer of white inverts the base layer's colours. This mode can be useful for aligning layers: the image will go black if a duplicate layer is perfectly aligned with a layer below.

EXCLUSION
Exclusion works in a similar manner to Difference mode, because blending with white inverts the lower layers' colours. However, if you decide to blend with neutral colours, you'll produce a perfect inversion of your artwork.

SUBTRACT & DIVIDE
Subtract (see above) takes away values from the lower layers, which has the result of drastically darkening pixels by subtracting brightness. Divide achieves the opposite effect, and introduces a significant amount of brightness to your image.

5 Control the effects of colour with the Color blend modes

The Color blend modes are used for altering colours in your artwork, whether you're looking to tweak the hue, saturation, full colour or luminosity on the layers below. They're perfect for developing even more precise results with your shades.
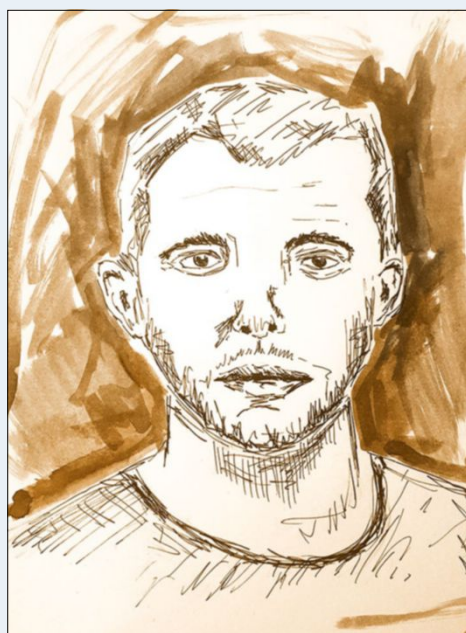
HUE & COLOR
The Hue blend mode (shown above) will turn all layers below to the hue of the blend layer, without affecting the saturation or luminosity of the image. Color will alter all the layers below to the colour of the blending layer, changing the hue and saturation, while preserving the luminosity.

SATURATION
The Saturation blend mode will turn all layers below to the saturation of the blend layer, without affecting the hue or luminosity of the image. This mode is useful when you want to give your painting a particular tint, or go the other way and develop a monotone appearance.

LUMINOSITY
Luminosity keeps the hue and saturation of the layers below, while altering luminosity. This is a rarely used blend mode, but can help you to control the tone in your artwork. But as with all the blend modes we've mentioned here, play around with them to see what effects you can achieve!

Next month in...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

Animation

The world's finest artists from Disney, Pixar and more unite to help you bring your best-ever creations to life!

All this and more!

Unmissable interviews!
We speak with Armand Serrano and Louie del Carmen!

Storyboarding masterclass
Get your story right from the start with Wendy Grieb.

Character design tips
Learn from Pernille-Ørum-Nielsen's essential guide!

Create art with impact
Paint humour and action with David Ardinaryas Lojaya.

ISSUE 165 ON SALE IN THE UK *Friday 10 August*

Photoshop
BUILD A WORLD WITH CONCEPT ART

VIDEO WORKSHOP

Anthony Macbain, an artist with over a decade of experience in the video game industry, demonstrates the process of creating entire worlds through illustration

Artist
PROFILE

Anthony Macbain
LOCATION: US

Anthony Macbain spent 13 years as an artist and later director of illustration at Rockstar Games. He developed marketing art styles for Rockstar's top games including Grand Theft Auto V and Red Dead Redemption. He's now the lead artist at Triton City Entertainment, where he's working on the film franchise Dawn of the Paladin.
https://ifxm.ag/ant-mb

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RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: CLOUDS

My go-to brush tool preset for creating smoke effects. I've used this tool to create the smoky atmosphere of Madrak's chamber.

ROCKS

I use this brush tool preset for adding granite-like texture to objects made of stone, or in this case the powerful alien ore, Ouj.

World-building encompasses storytelling. To build a world is to create a believable set of parameters for multiple stories to exist, taking into account geology, technology, language, economics, art, culture, history and religion. As a world builder, you need to provide enough content through extensive brainstorming, sketching and research to give storytellers or games masters a boundary and direction, but without being so broad as to leave them with too many options.

For this workshop, I'm creating an illustration of a character from a world I'm helping to build called Dawn of the Paladin. The story takes place tens of thousands of years in the future where a small group of peacekeepers called the Paladin are the protectors of a remote three-planet colony. They've developed a fighting style that utilises skills only mastered by accessing dormant areas of the human brain.

Unbeknownst to the Paladin, the powers they're harnessing from within their brains are being heightened by their proximity to an alien ore under the ground called Ouj (pronounced "weej").

A new wave of organised crime has hit the colony's inhabitants, led by a character named Mogul, a mysterious and vicious warlord from a distant planet and part of an alien race called the Bawn. In this illustration, Mogul has sent a messenger to retrieve his estranged, yet even more powerful and diabolical mother, the evil intergalactic villain, Madrak. Due to Madrak's telepathic powers, the terrified messenger is expected, and she beckons him toward her.

Madrak is well aware of the properties ouj has to enhance her physical and mental powers, going so far as to create an entire chamber and throne made from the ore, so its energy continually fuels her.

1 Preliminary character concept
Before starting an illustration, I produce a development sketch for each character in the story to ensure that they all feel part of the same world. The sketch should show off the character's costume, but also convey a bit of personality in their stance and facial expression. If you've never read the story, you could still tell a bit about what kind of person this is. I pull references from a variety of sources including films, art and real life to inspire the vibe I'm aiming for.
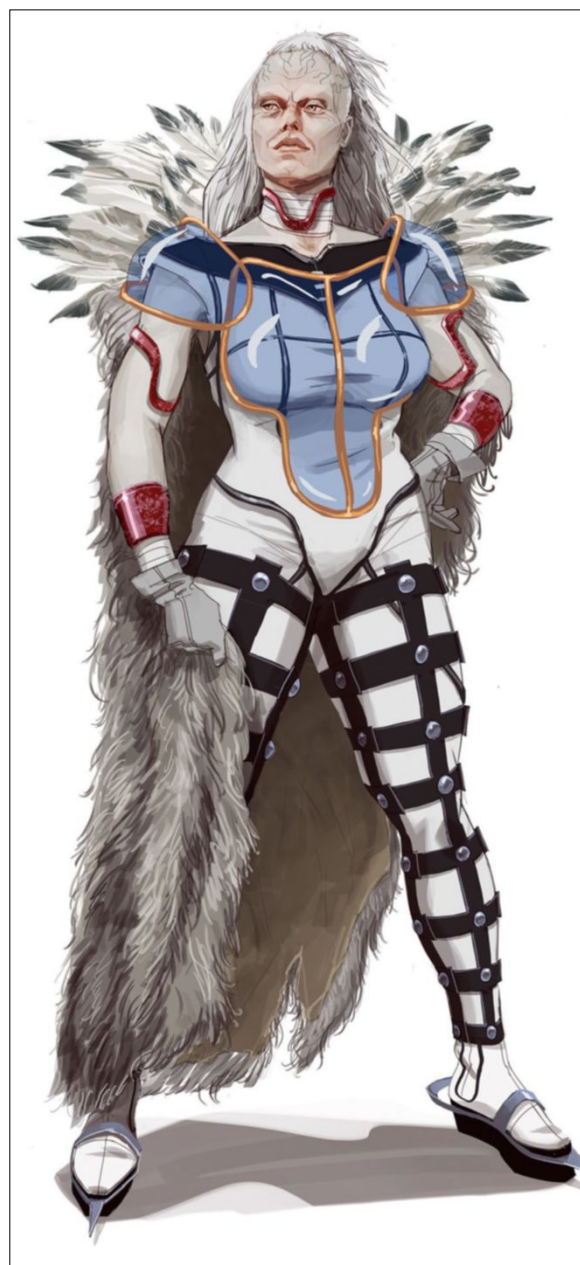
2 Pencil sketch of the composition

Now let's create a narrative illustration of Madrak! I start using pencil on paper for a loose thumbnail of the composition. I like working on paper at this early stage, because there are fewer distractions than when on my computer. I'm just thinking about basic shapes and what will be the focal point of the image. I'm not worried about doing a bad drawing, just focusing on telling the story through the image.
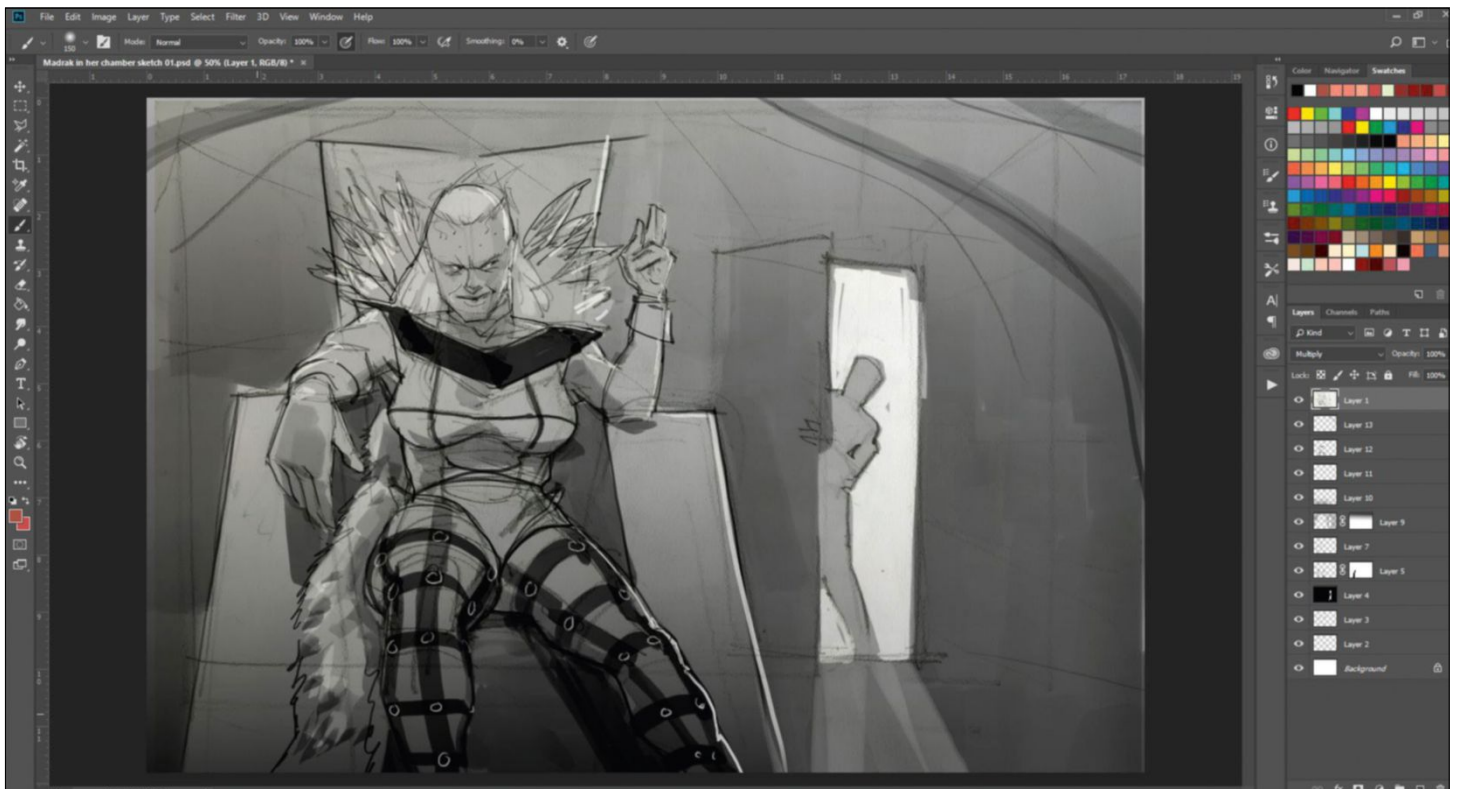
3 Digital sketch with value

Once I'm happy with the overall composition, I scan the pencil sketch and add values and lighting in Photoshop. By keeping the pencil drawing on a layer set to Multiply at the top, I can paint in greyscale underneath it without disturbing the original. ➤➤

4 Refining the design

With the values set, I start painting above the pencil sketch to refine the design. An excellent way to make your worlds believable is to reference things that exist in real life, and then alter or combine them with new ideas that leave the viewer with a feeling of familiarity. For Madrak's chamber, I'm inspired by things ancient and modern. The throne is influenced by Inca ruins I visited in Peru, while the chamber inspiration comes from the modern installation artist, James Turrell.
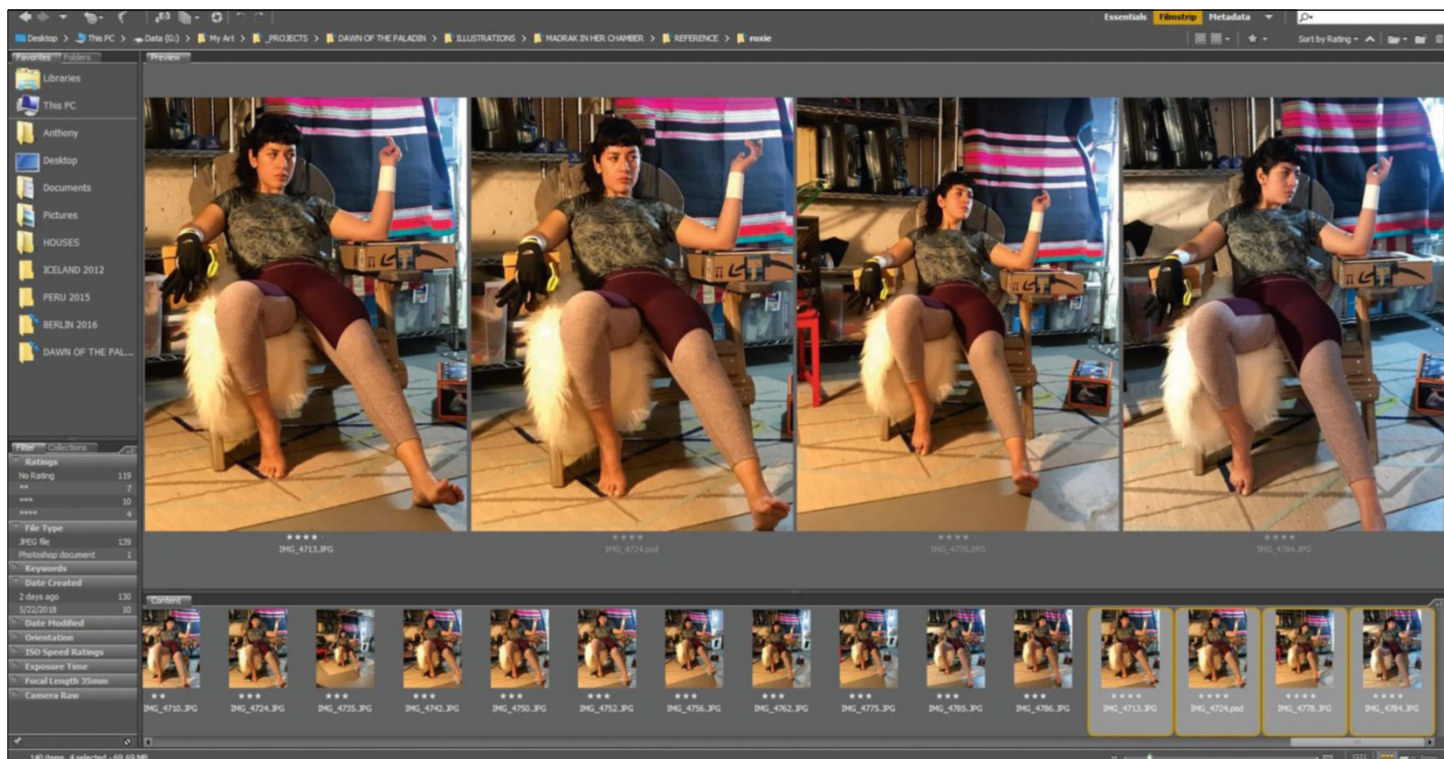
5 Taking photo reference

If you're on a budget, you can achieve a lot without the use of elaborate costumes or paid models. In this case, a friend posed for me to provide a general anatomical reference with lighting. I'm using a hanging bulb for the shaft of light and whatever costume articles are close at hand. I'll take dozens of photos at slight variations of angles to capture the perfect gesture.
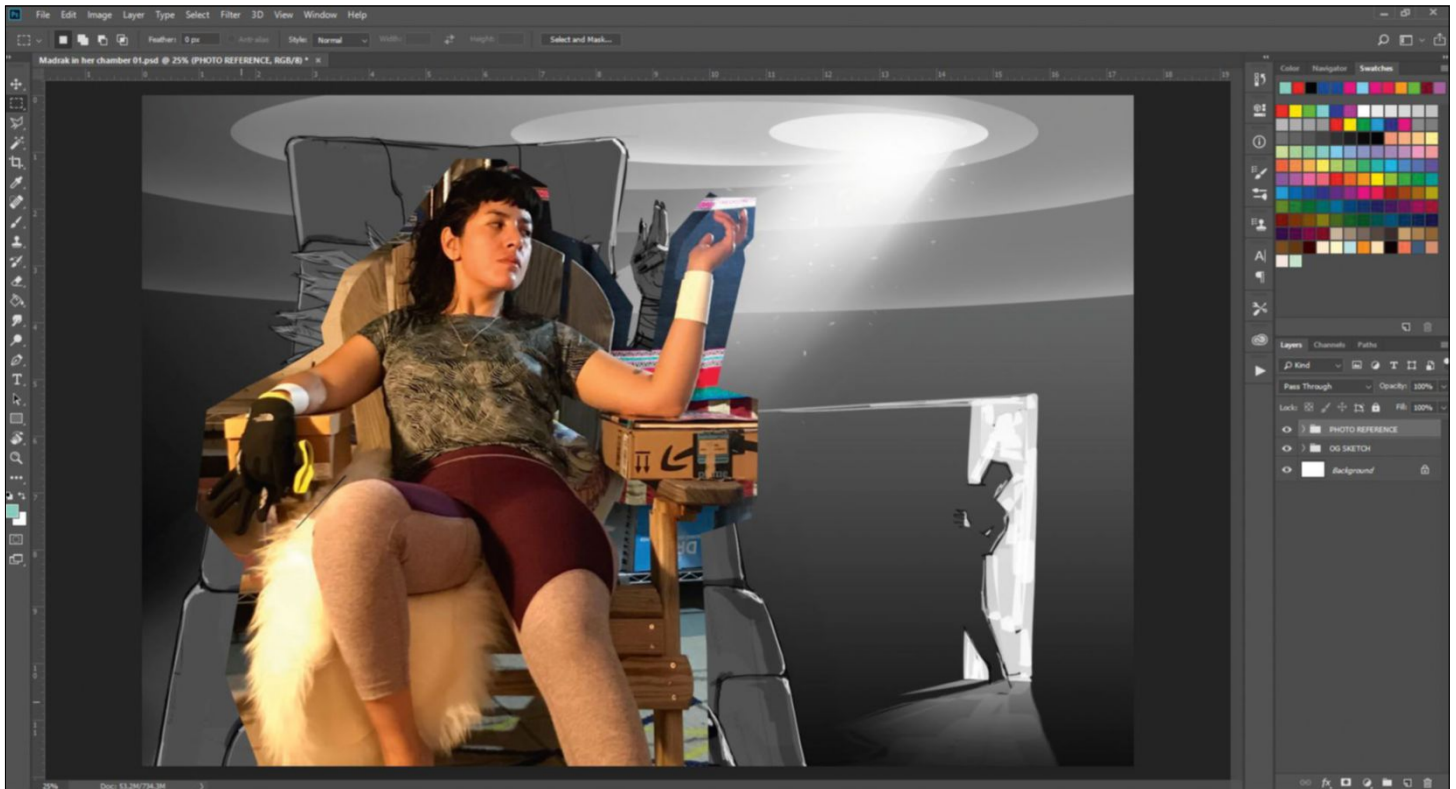
6 Selecting photo reference and adjusting proportions
Choosing the perfect photo can be tricky when looking at 100 options. I start narrowing them down by discarding the ones that don't work. Then I look for that perfect gesture, sometimes combining multiple photos. Good acting is important when shooting reference. In this case, the pose the model struck was even better than what I had sketched. When I think I've got it, I plop it into my composition to see how it sits.
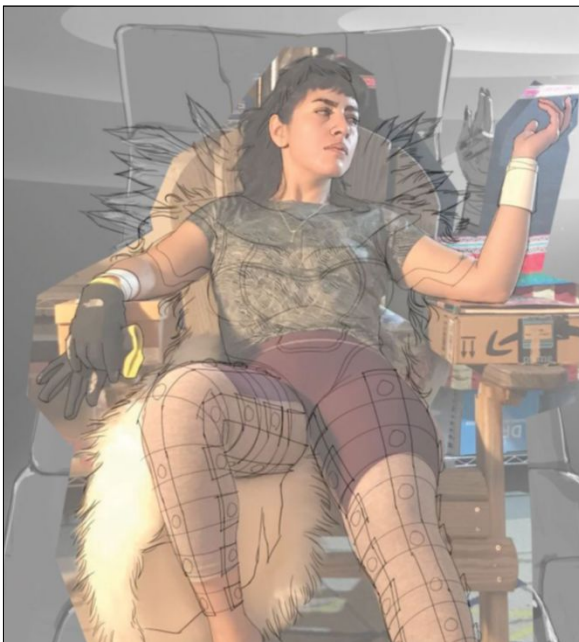
7 Produce a line drawing
I size the sketch to the final image resolution at 300dpi and begin working directly into it. Then I create a new layer, filling it with white and reducing the Opacity so I can still see the photo, but my line is more visible – like a sheet of tracing paper. Then, in a new layer above the white, I do a clean line tracing, while at the same time making modifications and including costume details.

8 Filling in flat shapes
Next I create flat shapes under my line drawing for all the different forms that make up her costume. I use contrasting colours so I can see what I'm delineating. The real colours will go in later, but I usually keep this "wacky colour" version throughout so that I can quickly select parts as a mask using the Magic Wand. ➤➤

9 Creating a greyscale drawing

I then duplicate the colourful shapes to a new layer, click the Lock Pixels button at the top of the Layers panel (so they retain a clean edge) and fill each one with the correct values in greyscale. Then, selecting each shape with the Magic Wand tool, I paint transparently on separate layers using the basic wedge-shaped brush to render the character in grey values.
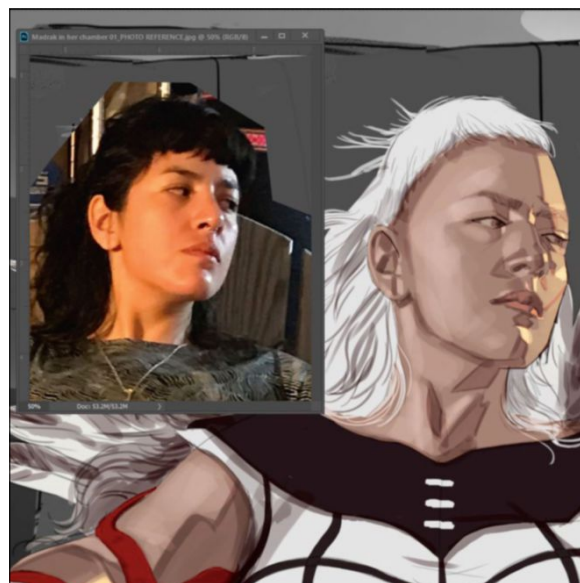
10 Introducing colours using Multiply and Overlay modes

To add colour, I group my greyscale layers and create a Gradient Map using two points of colour: a very dark brown (almost black) and white. I clip this to the layer group by holding Alt and clicking just in between my Layer Group and the Gradient Map in the Layers panel. This gives the tonal drawing some warmth in the dark areas. Then I paint into the light areas of the skin with a light yellow on a layer set to Overlay. This will add colour while preserving the underdrawing.
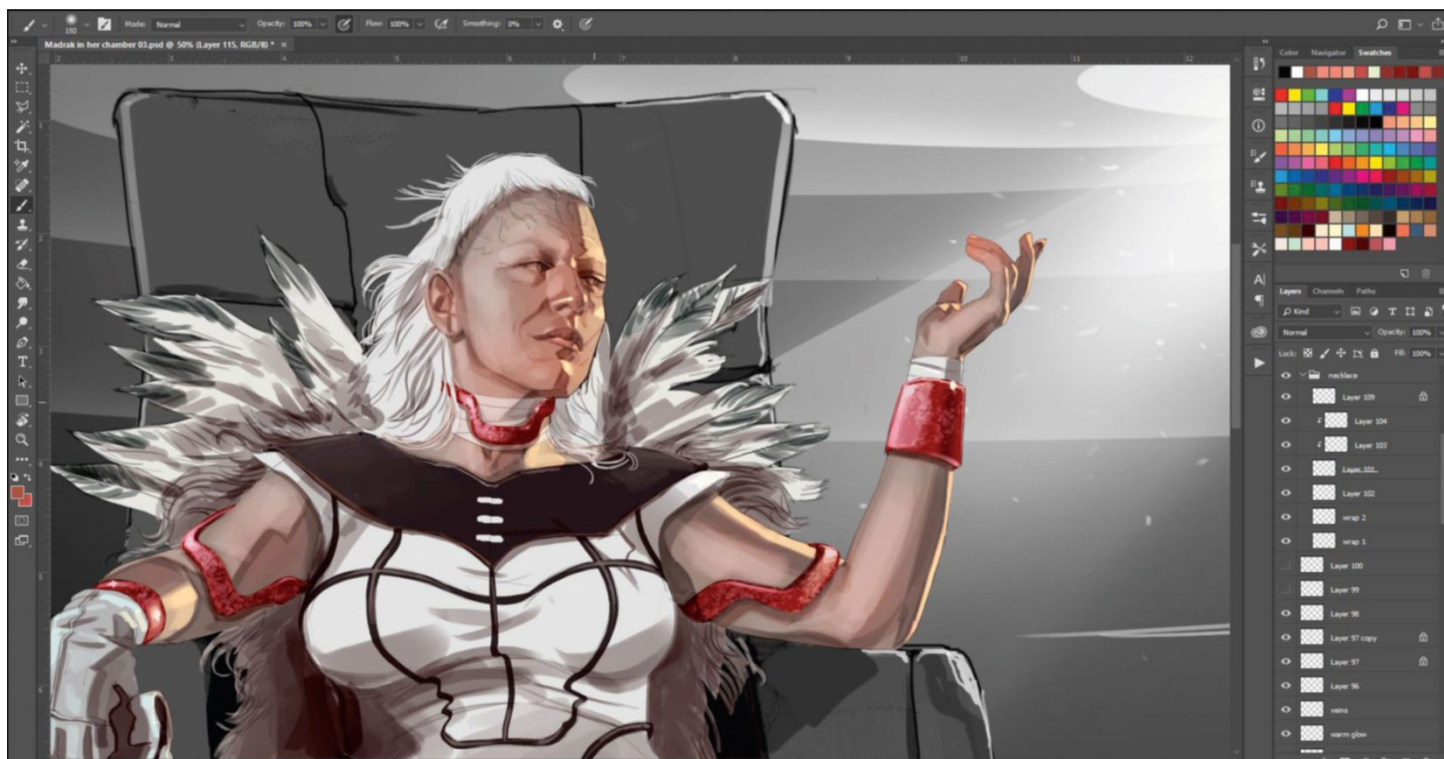
11 Enhancing the rendering

Now that the basic painting is all there, here comes the fun part! I begin to paint using layers set to Normal to add details. Madrak's home planet has lower sunlight levels than Earth. This means her hair and eyes have no pigment, and her skin appears transparent with veins protruding from her forehead. These alien features were determined while developing her concept sketch to visualise elements of the story.
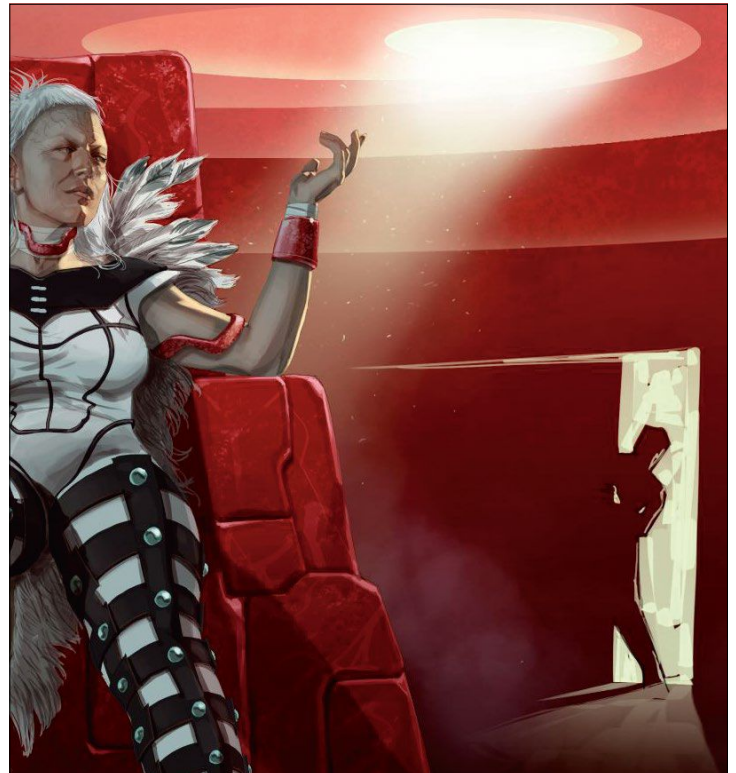
12 Bringing in lighting and smoke effects

I move on to the background, adding colour and refining the light source. Using a photograph I took as inspiration, I render the shaft of light using the Gradient tool and Airbrush to create the bright glow within the dark chamber. Particles floating in the air, smoke and mist add to the mood. I use my custom Clouds brush for the smoke. Additionally, I employ my Rocks brush to add texture to the Ouj ore.

13 Working on background character

I want the background character to be a simple silhouette cut out by the bright light coming from behind the door. To keep it looking realistic, I take a quick photo of myself to use for reference. He needs to appear very frightened of the person he's come to visit and it comes through in his sheepish pose.

14 Adding those finishing touches

At last, I take a good long look at the image. If I have time before my deadline, I'll step away from it, either by going for a walk or waiting until the morning so I can review it with fresh eyes. There's always something to be fixed. In this case, I make some adjustments to the facial proportions to closer resemble the development sketch, and clean up the edges of the circular shapes in the ceiling. Beware Madrak, the intergalactic villain of the Bawn race!

Substance Painter
TEXTURING IN SUBSTANCE PAINTER

Follow video games artist **James Brady's** pro-level advice for creating realistic-looking in-game assets

Artist PROFILE

James Brady
LOCATION: Ireland

James is a freelance artist working in the video games industry. He's an avid Snapback cap and quadcopter fanboy, and makes a mean cup of tea.
https://bradyart.xyz

In this workshop, I will be guiding you through the basics of texturing a game asset using the 3D painting program Substance Painter.

We'll be texturing a game-ready wrench asset. For this workshop I've already created all the required maps such as the normal, AO, curvature, position and thickness map, so we won't need to go through the baking process and instead can jump right into the fun!

We'll be texturing in a realistic manner, following real-life reference photos of old and rusty tools, studying how decay appears on materials, and then applying those principals to our own materials in Substance Painter.

By the end of this workshop, you'll feel comfortable navigating Substance Painter's user interface, applying materials, adjusting material values and exporting those materials for a game engine. So without further ado, let's get started!

Name	Date modified	Type	Size
T_Wrench_01_New	13/06/2018 21:21	Substance Painter ...	147,247 KB

1 Loading the painter file

Open Substance Painter and then click File>Open. Load the Substance Painter file called T_Wrench_01_New. The wrench asset will appear in your viewport with the required maps already applied. Browse the sub-menus and user interface until you feel comfortable moving on to the next step.

2 Navigating the User Interface

Once the project has finished loading and you can see the model of the wrench in the viewport with the required maps that need to be applied, navigate your way down to the program's Shelf. This is located at the bottom of the user interface. Inside of Shelf, you'll find everything you need for this workshop, such as Materials, Smart Materials, masks and alphas for interesting-looking detailing. Scratches, dirt, spots and stains will help to convince the player that the wrench firmly belongs in the game world.

PRO SECRETS

Reference photos are key
When texturing an asset for a game, you should always be following real-world references of the asset you're developing. If the asset needs to textured in a realistic manner, such as this wrench, then start by gathering references that relate to old, rusty, dirty-looking work tools. This will help you in texturing your game model correctly. ➤➤
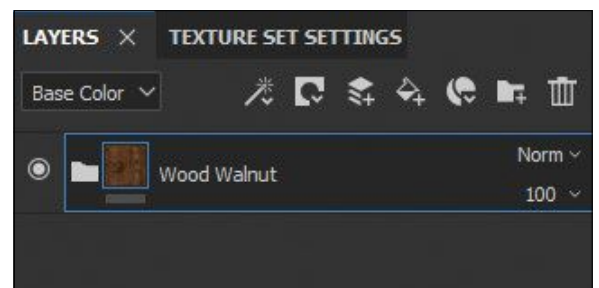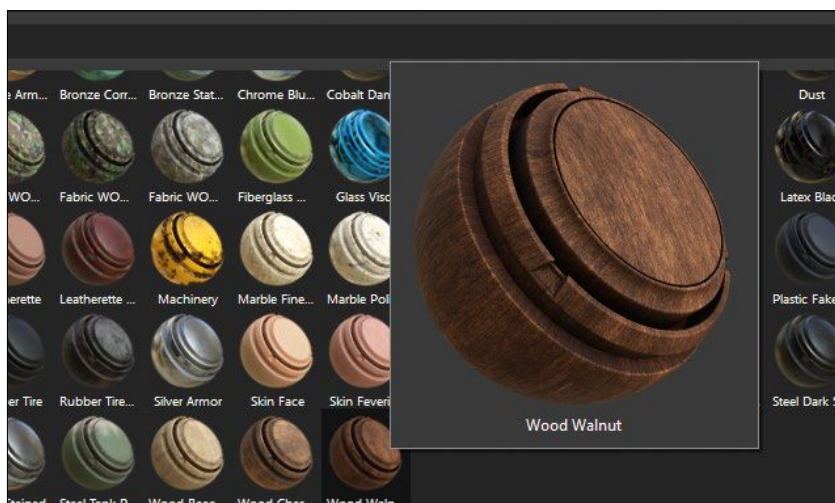
3 Applying your first material

To get started, let's apply a wood material to the base of the Wrench. I navigate my way to Smart Materials that's found in Shelf, and select then Wood Walnut. Next, I drag that material over to the right-hand side of the user interface and drop it into Layers. The material is now present on the model. ➤➤
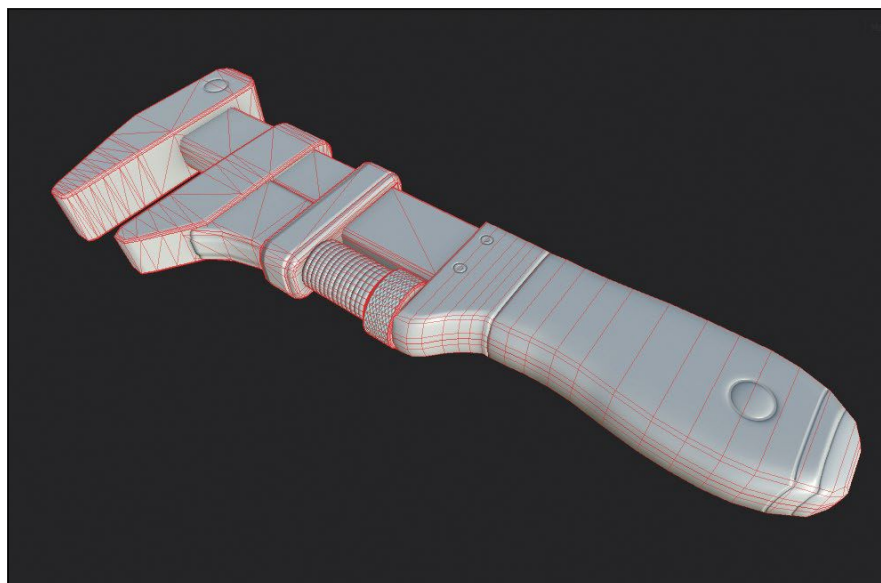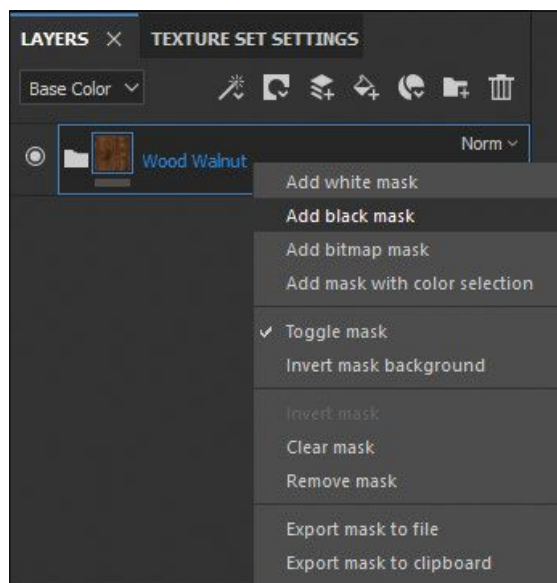
4 Laying a mask across your asset

Because I want the wood material to only appear on the base of the wrench model, I right-click the material located in Layers and select Add Black Mask. I then navigate over to the left-hand side toolbar and select Polygon Fill. Now I can see a wireframe present on the model, and I'll use this as a guide for applying our material.

5 Choose your materials using Polygon Fill

Next, I navigate my way over to the right-hand side of the user interface to a sub-menu called Properties – Polygon Fill. Within this sub-menu you can select three different fill modes: Triangle Fill, Polygon Fill and Mesh Fill. Let's select Polygon Fill and then by simply clicking the visible quads on the wireframe, I can apply the Wood material to the wrench's handle.
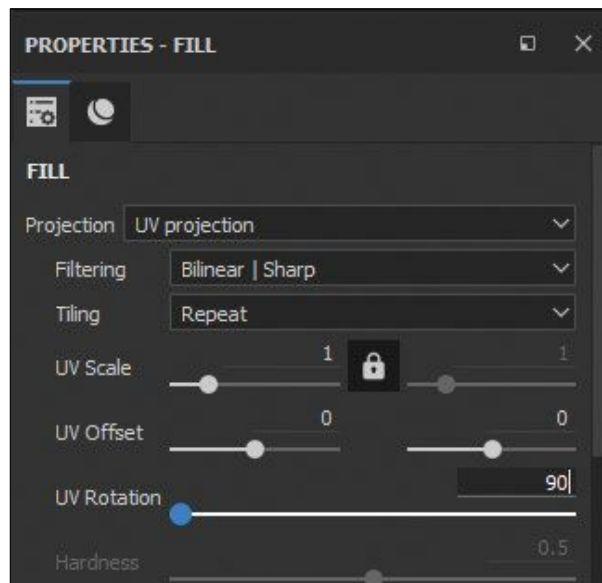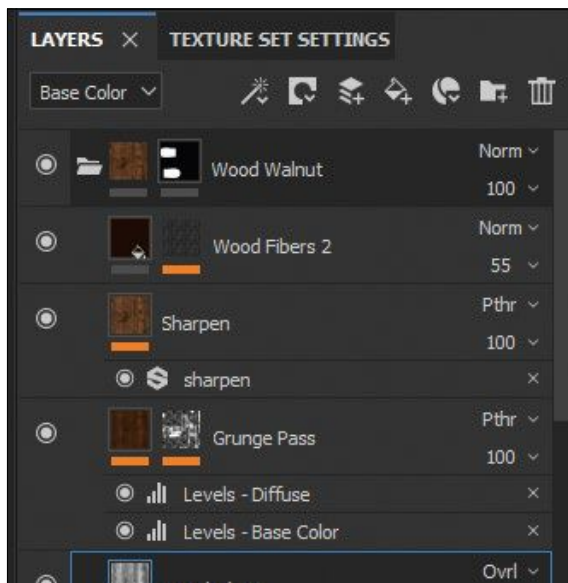
6 Adjusting material values

Now that the wood material has been applied, I can adjust its values. Let's start by adjusting the wood grain, which isn't flowing at the correct angle. Click the folder icon alongside the wood material and select Wood Fibers. In the Properties Fill menu adjust UV rotation to 90. You'll see the wood grain switch 90 degrees and flow correctly.
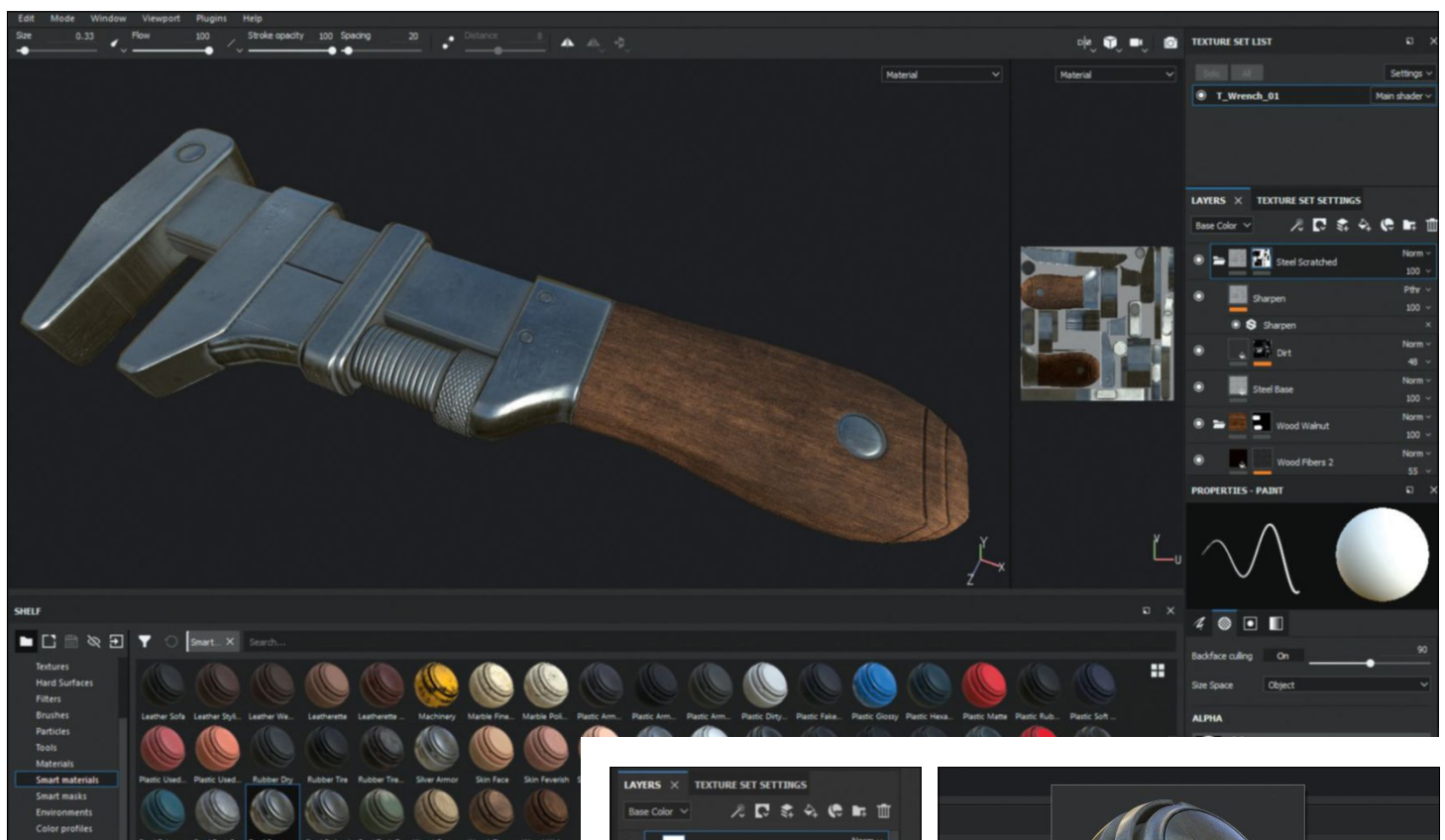
7 Working with more materials

Now that I've applied the wood material and adjusted the material values, it's now time to apply materials to the rest of the model. I start by navigating to Shelf>Smart Materials>Steel Scratched. I'll once again drag the material over to Layers and right-click>Add Black Mask. I now use Polygon Fill and apply the material to the rest of the model. ➤➤
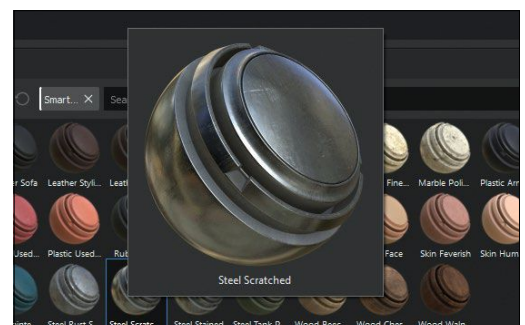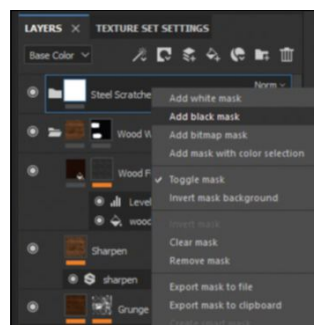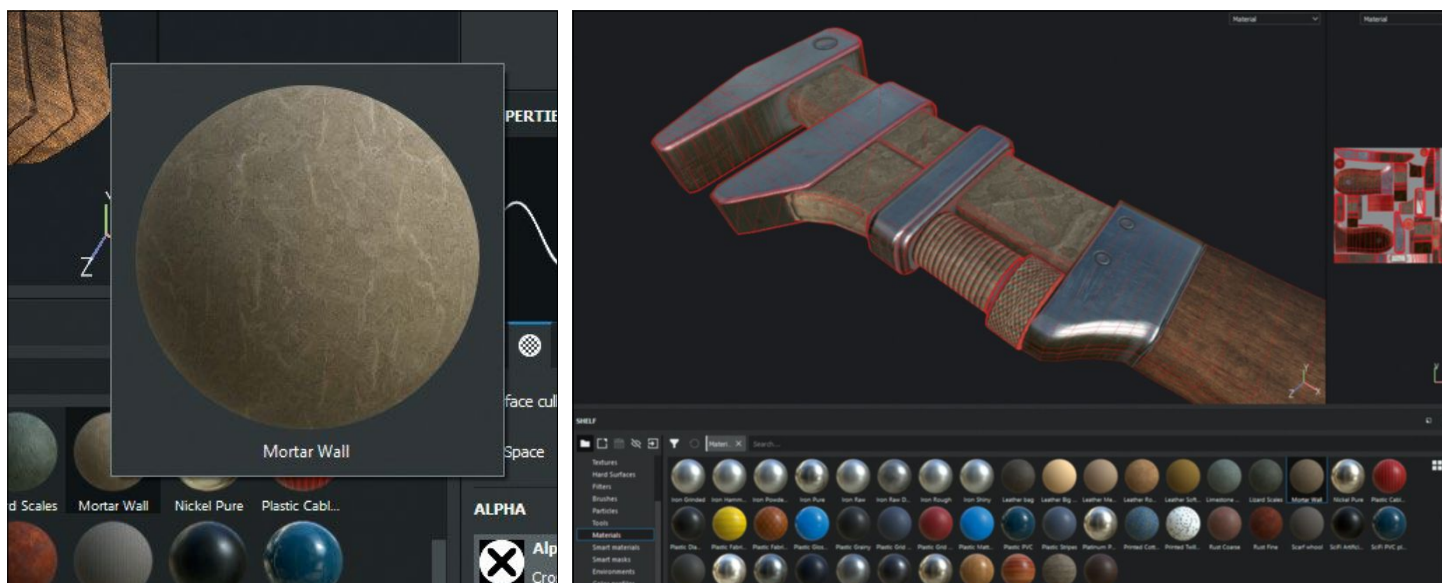
8 Give your wrench a layer of dirt

Now that I have a fully textured asset inside Substance Painter, let's push the detail further, starting with some dirt. Navigate to Shelf>Materials>Mortar Wall, followed by dragging the material to Layers. Add Black Mask and then select Polygon Fill. You can now apply the dirt material to parts of the model. Feel free to apply the dirt material wherever it's needed.
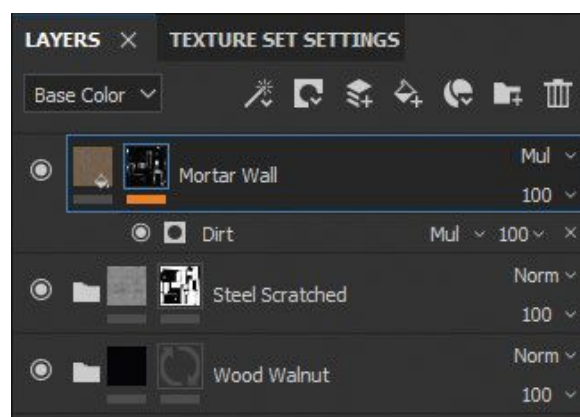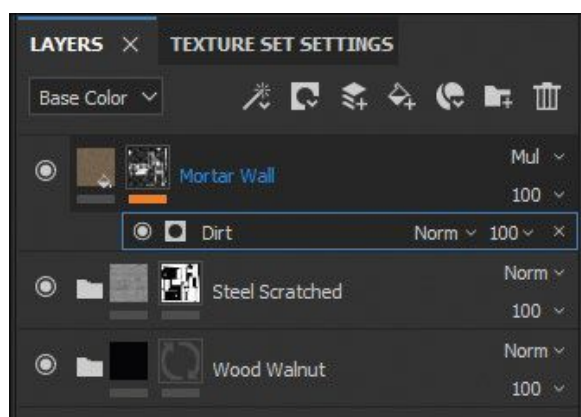
PRO SECRETS

Illusion is key
Remember that textures aren't cheap, so use them wisely. Varying how much you darken your values when texturing different sections of a model can help push the visual fidelity and can essentially fake ambient occlusion or SSAO (screen spaced occlusion). This takes a lot of pressure off your graphical budget and helps boost performance and levels of realism.

9 Working with Generators

Now that I've applied our dirt material, I'll use a Generator to spread the dirt around key parts of the model, applying the dirt as it would appear in the real world: in crevices, gaps and so on. Right-click the dirt material and click Add Generator. In Properties – Generator select Dirt. Tick Multiply on the material channel to ensure it only spreads around selected areas.

10 Adjusting Generator values

Navigate to the Properties – Generator Window. Here you'll find different adjustment options such as Dirt Level, Dirt Contrast, Grunge Amount and so forth. In the Image Inputs section you'll see the maps we need for realistically spreading the dirt. Feel free to adjust these. Make sure to set the Dirt Generator to Multiply so it only spreads in the selected areas.
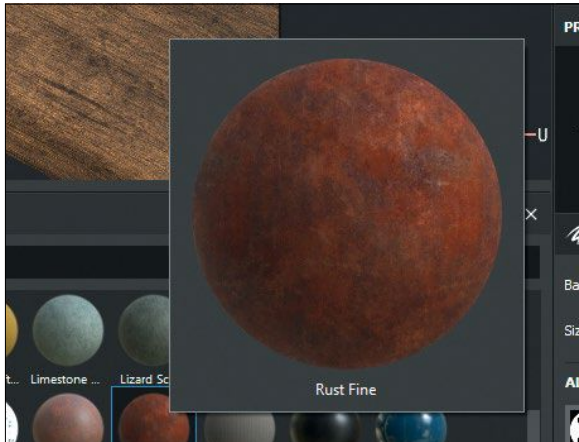
11 Boost the realism with rust

Adding some rust to the model helps to push a narrative for this game asset. It tells the player that this tool has seen a lot of use. Navigate to Shelf>Materials> Rust Fine and drag to Layers, followed by Add Black Mask. This time I'll use alphas such as Dirt Stain and Stain Splat. These are found under Shelf>Alphas.
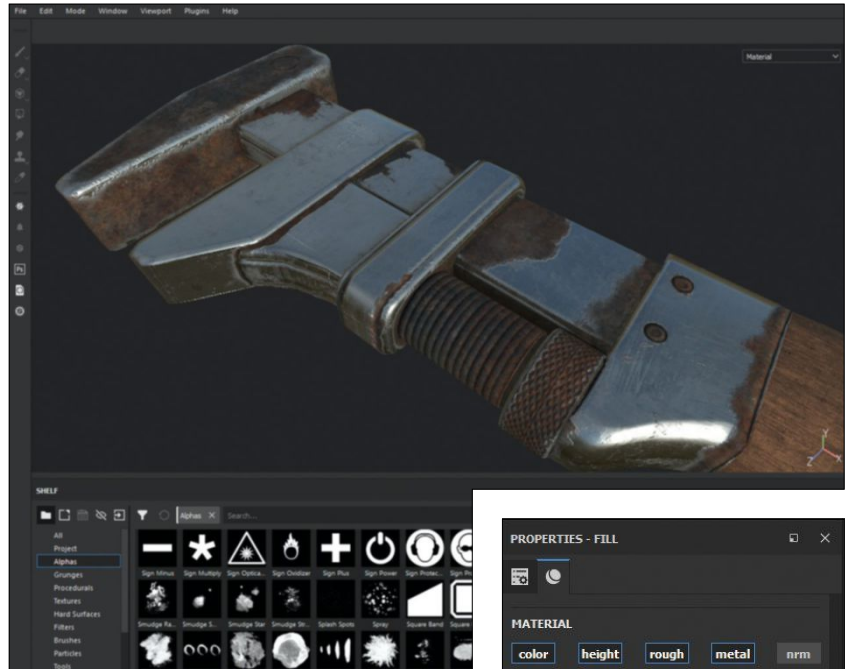
12 Edit material height values

Now that I have applied the rust material, I can adjust the height of the rust. This helps to create an interesting break between the rust and metal materials. I achieve this by navigating to the Properties>Fill menu found on the right-hand corner of the User Interface. Select Technical Parameters and drag the Height Position above 0.5. You'll see the Material Normal value increase.
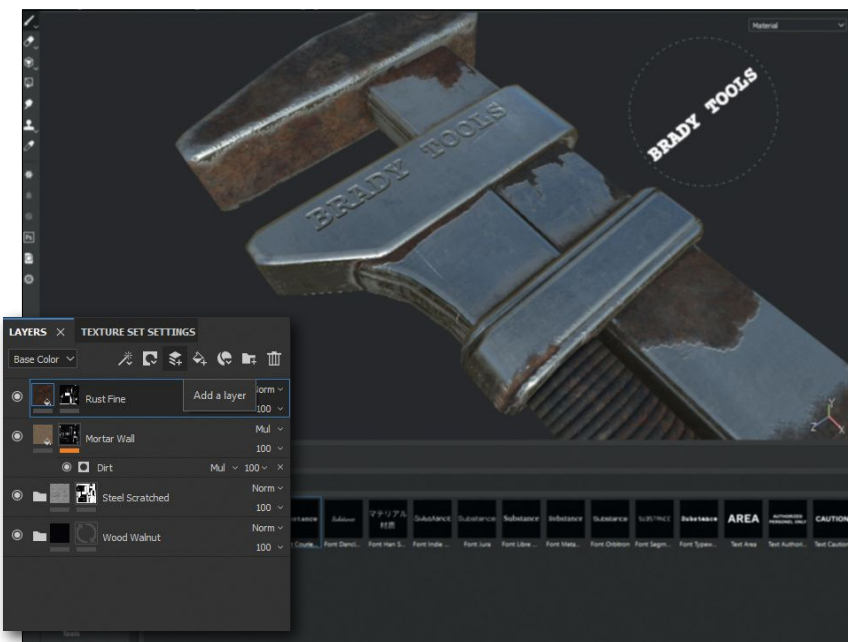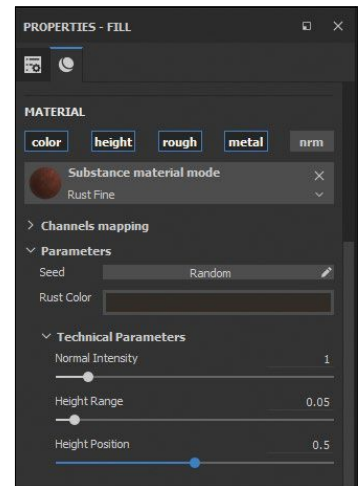
13 Place a logo on to the object

Adding a fake manufacturer's logo further adds to the wrench's realism. Start by creating a new layer: go to Layers>Add a layer and call it Text. Next, click Shelf>Alphas>Fonts and select Font Courier. In Properties – Paint supply suitable text, such as Brady Tools. You can also adjust the height values in this menu, too.
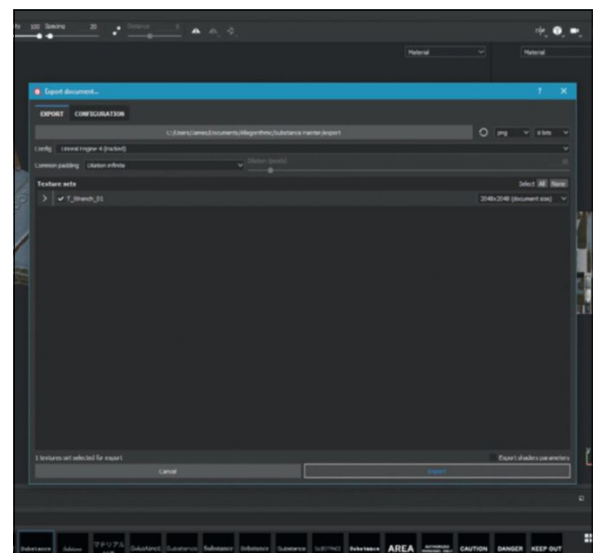
14 Exporting the model

Congratulations! You've textured your game asset in Substance Painter. Now we can export our material for previewing in a game engine. Go to File>Export Textures. This brings up a window called Export Document. Inside this window you can see the file export location, file type, texture sets and document size. You also can change the configuration to export for to a particular game engine.

Artist insight
15 WAYS TO BE A BETTER ARTIST

Ever wanted to know the tricks of the concept art trade? Artist **Eddie Del Rio** shares his tried and tested creative workflow techniques

Artist PROFILE
Eddie Del Rio
LOCATION: US

Eddie's worked as a concept designer for the past 20 years in film and games. His clients have included LucasArts, Warner Bros., Fox Entertainment Group, Lucasfilm, Disney, THQ, Activision and 2K Games. These days, Eddie works primarily from home with his family in California.
www.eddiedelrio.com

Time and time again I get asked what's my process. Truth be told, I don't have just one process. Instead, I use a tool box that's full of techniques. It helps to save time and create a smooth flow of ideas.

Generally, no two assignments are the same. They're not cookie-cutter tasks. They require different moods, design, creativity, touch and feeling. After a while you figure that out and you pick the best tools for the job.

So, for this article, the ImagineFX team asked me to share several tools from my creative box. I'll show you how I use them individually and in tandem with others. Sometimes one technique works well for something, while other times you'll need the whole arsenal of tools and tricks to make the image sing and hit the deadlines. Okay, let's begin!

PART ONE: QUICK SKETCHES

1 PAINTING FAST SKETCHES FOR FUN

I spend about an hour on each one of these guys. Fun, simple sketches like these can be cranked out and help to fill out a portfolio. Try and take some time out of a day or evening, and do a quick colour sketch now and then. You may not always be happy with the final piece, but there's a good chance that you'll have learned something new during the image creation process – and you may even produce a decent portfolio piece out of it to boot.

2 SELF-PROMOTION TOOL

As well as having experimental, high-energy pieces interspersed throughout your portfolio, you can use them as a handy calling card for a spot of self-promotion.

After you've produced a piece that you're happy with, add it to your online portfolio. Then roll up your sleeves and get busy on social media. Hit all the outlets: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and

more. Remind people that you're still making art. Artists can't always show off their client work because of NDAs. Personal pieces go a long way towards maintaining your online presence.

3 FLESH OUT A VARIETY OF STYLES AND CONTENT

Here's another reason to produce some quick sketches. Perhaps you've heard from a friend that a project's coming up and you'd like to show you're capable of working in that genre or style. Do a sketch to show that you'd be a

good fit. It doesn't need to be on the nose as far as content is concerned – just something that looks like it would fit in that particular world. There's a chance the art director will see it and think that you're a good match. If not, no matter – you still have another quality promotional piece to use as you see fit. �

> 66 **Personal pieces go a long way towards maintaining your online presence** 99
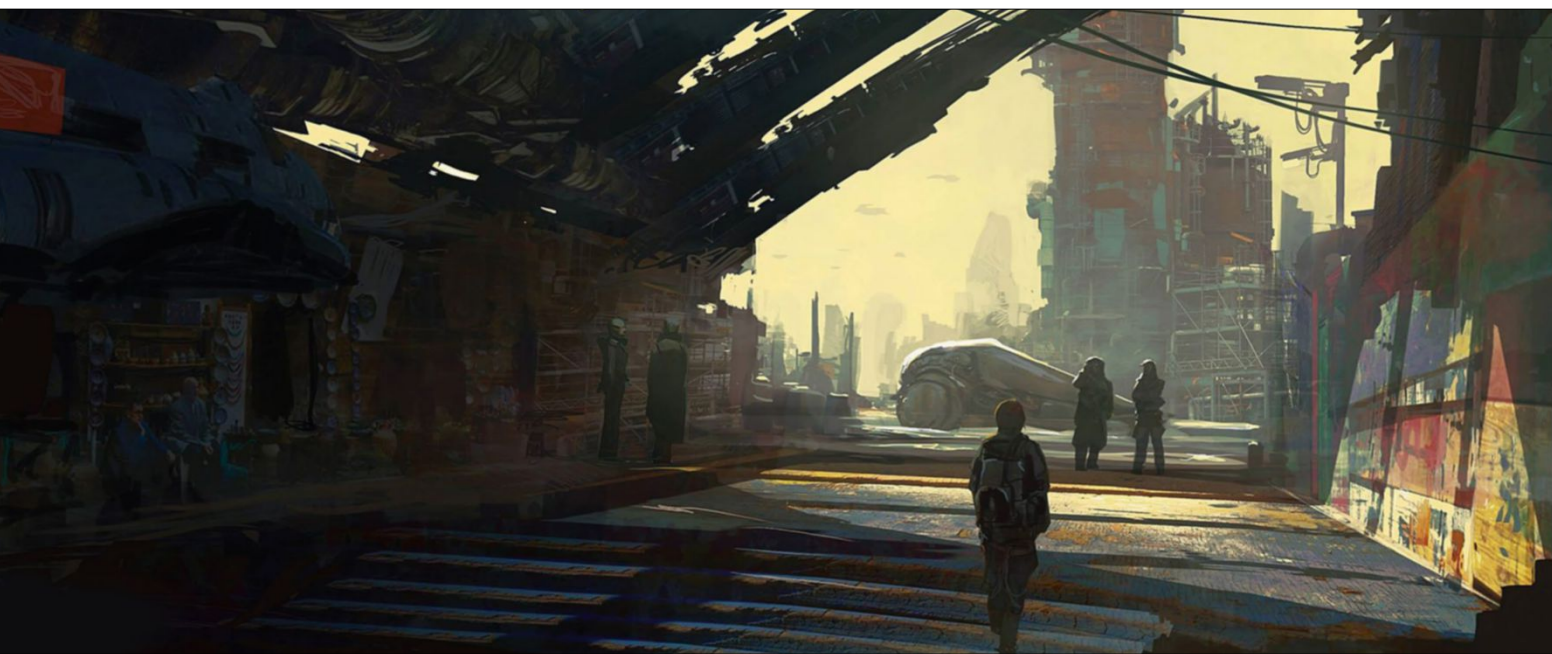
4 LEARN TO BECOME A GOOD STORYTELLER

One good thing that these quick sketches force you to do is think about storytelling. For this piece, I didn't know what I was going to paint before I started. And I'm sure I spent the first 10 minutes going back and forth on what the subject matter was going to be. But eventually I started to illustrate a corridor and some shapes in the background.

Because I was working so fast and loose I began to think about smaller facets of the story. For example, how I do I express these ideas in a very simple visual language? Here, the two characters outside are clearly together, while the character in the foreground is alone. The foreground character represents the viewer and the background figures are the mystery and the action. As the viewer, you're forced to walk into that microcosm of mystery. It's the drama and mystery that really sells this piece. All of this was conceived while I was working. It's pretty fun and adds a whole other layer to a piece that would otherwise have been pretty generic.

5 WALKTHROUGH OF MY PROCESS

Previously, I've described how I approach my sketch work. Here, I've broken down my sketching process into two steps. I kick things off with a basic block-in. I might have a prepared textural background that I pre-paint or I'll just paint it during this step. Then I add the larger shapes and start to work out the composition and the story in the scene. The textures that I paint give the illusion of more detail present in the image then there really is. Some stuff like the figures are just scribbled blobs at this point.

Now that I have my story planned out, I begin to fully realise it…. or realise it just enough so that it's clear to the viewer. I add some lighting breaking through the tree foliage. Well, foliage that you really don't see. You only have the light hitting the ship and the small little clump of tree foliage in the foreground to inform the viewer of the space that's outside the picture frame.

Little design tricks such as this add scope to something that, on the surface, is pretty simple. The viewer's mind then works to fill in those gaps with the little hints and bread crumbs that I leave for them. I let the viewer's own imagination do some of the heavy lifting. As a result, they also feels more committed to the image and the story that it's trying to tell.
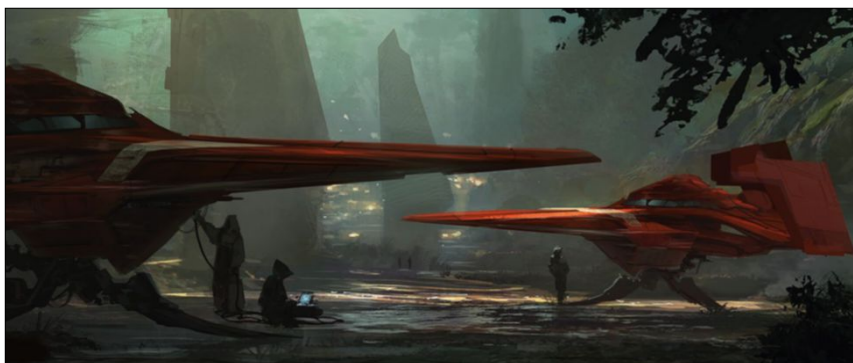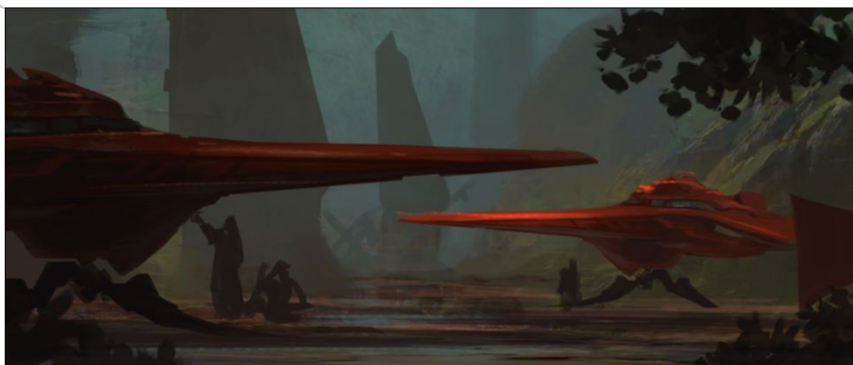
PART 2: PHOTOBASH

1 START WITH A STRONG SILHOUETTE

This image of a mech seen at an imposing angle may look like it was modelled and rendered in a 3D program, but it was actually photobashed together. I began by getting hold of a large collection of photographs of mechanical objects – some that I had taken myself. Then I fired up Photoshop and sketched out the silhouette of the mech. Only when I was happy with the general shape and design direction did I reach for the stack of photos. After that, I transformed and colour-matched elements from my photos to fit what I wanted. This image took between three and four hours to create.

2 USING PHOTOBASHING TO MAKE SOMETHING MORE ILLUSTRATIVE

Although it may not look it, there's a ton of photobash work here – about 80 per cent, I'd say. But it's heavily painted on. I start by laying in images almost immediately… almost designing with them. While I'm laying in images and bashing them together, I'm also selecting light and dark areas, and painting into them. I'm after the detail and texture: I leave out what I don't need and push the shapes that support the composition. For some parts I want lots of detail; elsewhere, I'll blow out the light values. This image contains dozens of elements from photos. You can see them on close inspection, but at first glance most people think it's a fully painted piece. I often use photobashing to a lesser degree in my art, towards the end of the painting process. It's an effective way of introducing a layer of texture to a scene.

This method works for me because I know the basics of painting. Photobashing enables me to expand on my core art skills – it's not a shortcut to becoming a good artist. It takes a lot of practice to use photos this way. ➤➤

> 66 Photobashing enables me to expand on my core art skills – it's not a shortcut to becoming a good artist 99

PART 3: USE 3D TOOLS FOR CONCEPTS

1 USING 3D TO DEPICT HARD SURFACES

For spaceships, vehicles, mech designs or in fact anything mechanical, I tend to use 3D tools. They enable me to design from multiple angles, and ensure that the finished work has a clean look. The art will be more precise, with sharper edges compared to the painterly results from using standard 2D tools. In addition, I can design the object from multiple angles, knowing that nothing will end up being fudged. It's going to be accurate. I like to see that in mechanical designs.

2 REPETITIVE ARCHITECTURE

Similar-looking buildings or architecture from dramatic angles is another reason for using 3D tools. Even if I'm going to end up painting on the art, it'll save me time if I model instead of drafting and plotting everything in 2D. Examples include rows of columns in interiors or building blocks in a street scene. 3D tools will boost your workflow in these assignments.

3 CREATING ASSETS THAT WILL BE USED ACROSS MULTIPLE IMAGES

Another reason for using 3D is if an asset is going to be used in a range of images. I spent a week or so designing this racing mech in 3D. I began with some rough 2D sketches, modelled the design, asked for feedback from friends and did multiple revisions. I was happy to spend this time up front because I knew I was going to use this asset across multiple images, and that having a fully formed design at the start would save me time later on. For example, take the reflections on the mech and the decals on the design. Achieving that look with just 2D would be a challenge.

> 66 I was happy to spend this time up front because I knew I was going to use this asset across multiple images 99

4 USE 3D ASSETS TO CREATE KEY FRAMES

Thanks to the pre-designed mech asset, it took me just under a day to put this scene together. This is one of six key frames that I developed featuring the mech. In the end, it speeds up the creative process – important when it's your IP and you have to do everything in your own time!

5 CREATING COMPLEX INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE OR MECHANICAL DESIGNS

This design was going to be pretty complicated with all the pipes and gears in a 3D space. To help save me time I modelled the scene in 3D and even lit and rendered it. All those pipes and railing would have been a pain to replicate in 2D, as well as taking time. But using 3D tools helped me to complete the scene quickly. The room is largely symmetrical so I could just mirror the geometry, and the rest is a lot of duplicated pipes. ➤

PART 4: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

1 FRAMING THE ACTION

Here, I wanted to do some fan art from a sci-fi children's show. I knew I didn't want to spend more than a day on it. The piece I had in mind was pretty epic, so I had to think how I could effectively develop the frame.

First, I did a quick sketch that conveyed the energy, the basic story premise, all the big elements and the overall composition. Then I got some photos and began taking out bits and pieces, comping them in while painting and editing the piece. After that I looked at

the big mech and Kaiju battling in the background, which was still pretty sketchy. Because it was the focal point I felt I could get a lot of bang for my buck if I modelled the mech. I didn't spend too much time modelling: it was all blocks and cylinders.

Then I photographed the actual toy of the mech and overlayed that photo on to the front of my model. It wasn't perfect, but it worked fine for me. I posed it quickly and then rendered it. I must have spent no more than and hour or so on the mech. I decided

that the kaiju could be painted up a little more than the sketch I did at the beginning.

I was about to call it quits, but then felt the chaos of the foreground elements was fighting with the flow of the image and distracting from the focal point. So I decided to add the bird fighter flying into the image, which I quickly modelled in my 3D package. I added it to the frame and painted the blue energy thrust. The fighter helped with the flow, directed the viewer into the focal point and framed the action – all at the same time!

2 FROM SKETCH TO FINISHED ART
How to consider focal points, storytelling and detailing in this epic sci-fi scene

A Getting the basics down
I lay down a fast and quick background, mostly to establish the palette and the general directions I want to go. This step prompts me to ask questions, such as what do I want to accomplish with this piece, and identifying the story I want to tell. Now I begin to answer the question of story. I choose my focal point and begin to build the scene.

3 GOING LIGHT ON PHOTOS

This piece was done primarily in 3D in the early stages. I then painted some values and some other large-scale details. But for the finer details and texture, I used photos. You can't really see them, but they're there. This was done more to add texture, creating the illusion that there's more detail than there is.

For the finer details and texture, I used photos. You can't see them, but they're there
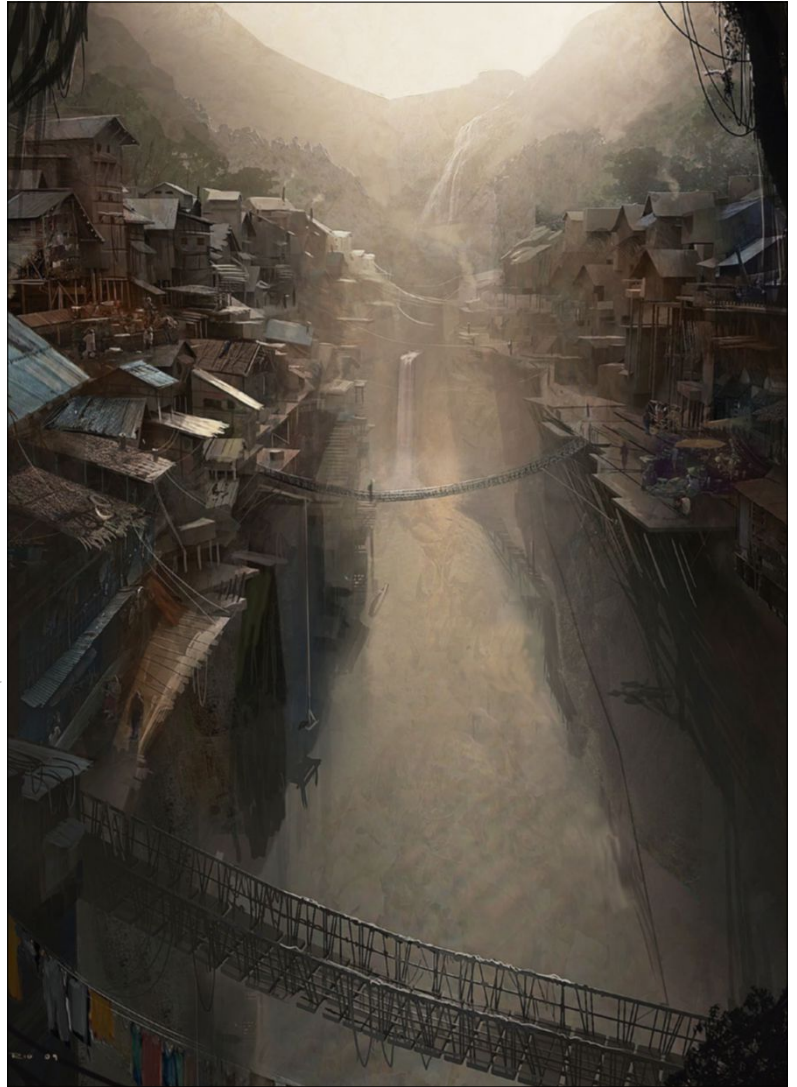
B Think about little story moments

I start to think about how people will interact in this world and begin to add smaller details to help define objects in the scene. This is definitely the fun part! You can bring in all kinds of little story moments to help enrich the composition.
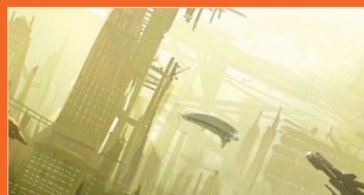
C Ensuring clarity throughout the scene

Now I just finish up the piece and begin to add more details and make sure that the image has a clean read. The viewer's experience is key!
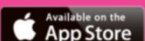
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Reviews

The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…

5 PRODUCTS ON TEST
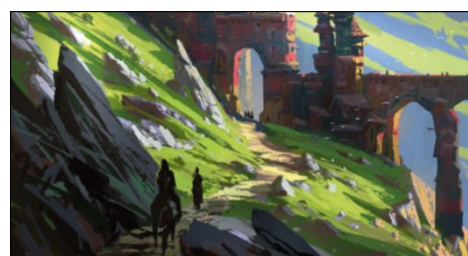
SOFTWARE

92 Rebelle 3
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Enjoy beautifully realised concept art from the film featuring the adventures of a wannabe smuggler in a galaxy far, far away.

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A man and his robot struggle to stay alive in this crowd-funded picture book and concept art resource.

97 Vision: Colour and Composition for Films
A world-renowned production designer shares his wisdom on colour and composition in this in-depth guide.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent ★★★★ Great ★★★ Good ★★ Poor ★ Atrocious

Rebelle 3 takes digital watercolours to a new level, with paint that responds to 'blowing' or tipping your Surface tablet. Art by Kamila Stankiewicz.
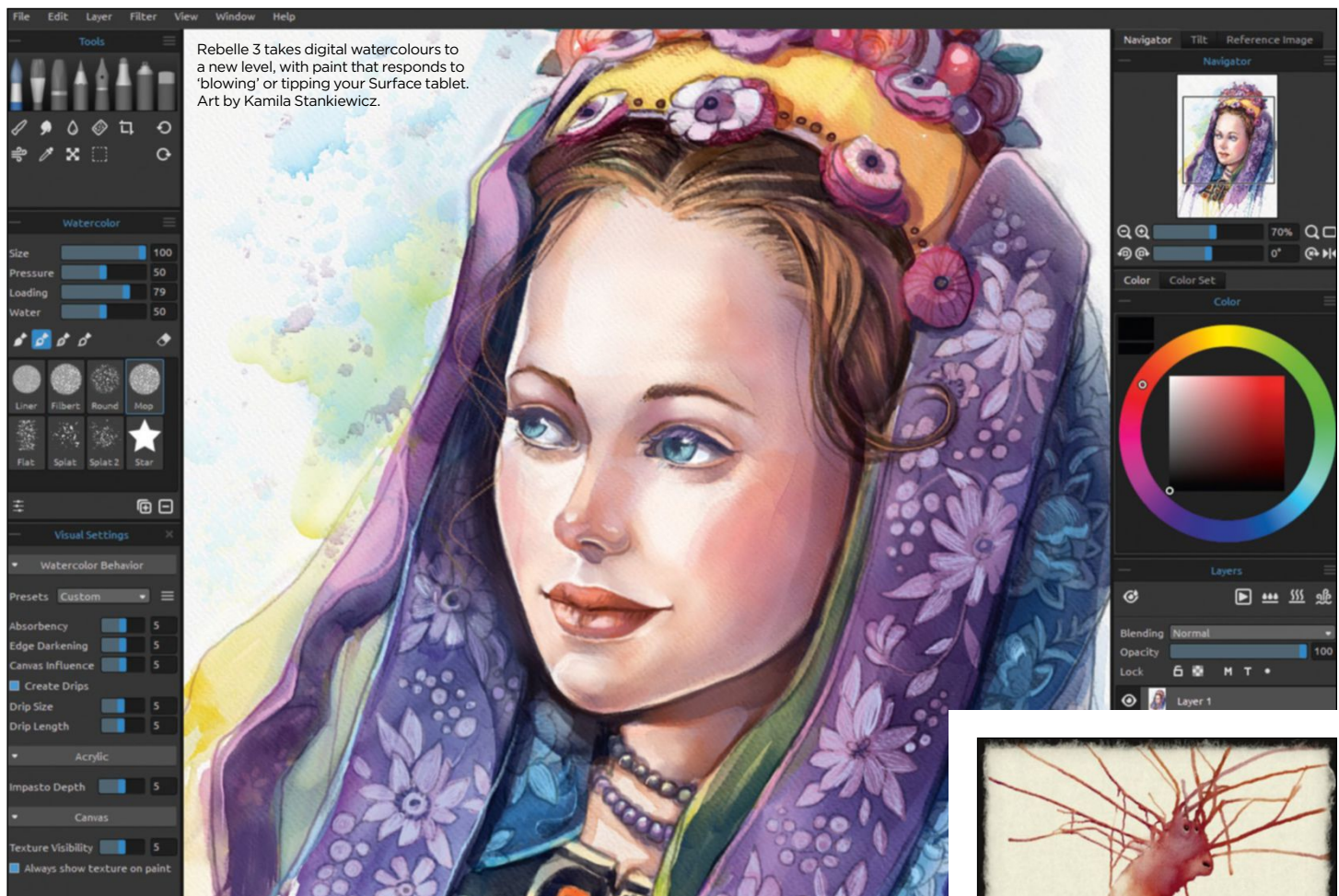
Rebelle 3 · MAC & PC

WATER WORKS Mesmerising digital watercolour tools heighten the appeal of this increasingly useful natural media package

Rebelle's DropEngine technology is what enables its droplets to behave in such a natural manner.
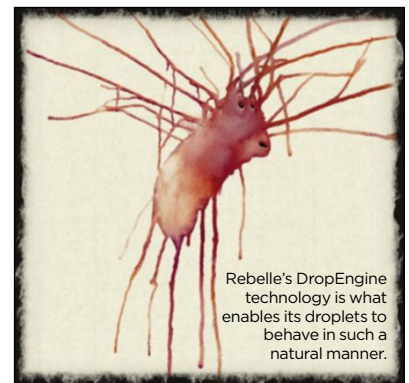
Price £68 **Company** Escape Motions **Web** www.escapemotions.com

Can digital painting ever feel as natural as working in traditional media? We're not there yet, but there's an army of software developers dedicated to achieving this goal. Painter and ArtRage are the best-known programs to offer 'natural media', a digital recreation of

Artist Hal used Rebelle 3's Masking Fluid Layer to save time when adding colour to a line drawing.
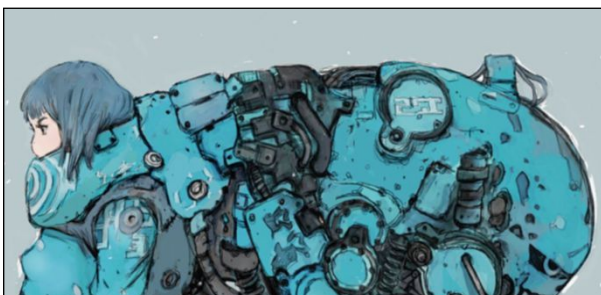
physical paints and surfaces, but Rebelle is an enticing alternative – and, in this third major release, seems capable of producing a few tricks the big guns can't yet match.

Rebelle offers a choice of media to draw or paint with: acrylic, pastel, pencil, ink and more – although not oils. But its biggest draw is its watercolour technology, which has been significantly updated in version 3. Make a stroke with one colour, then switch colour and paint over or near the first stroke, then watch as the two

strokes blend and flow together in a convincingly natural way. You can also load the brush with water to increase the extent of the interaction.

If you're using Rebelle 3 on Microsoft's Surface Pro tablet computer, you can use the device's built-in accelerometer to control the flow of paint: try physically tipping the tablet screen in one direction, and watch the watercolour droplets respond to the effect of gravity, as fed back to the software through the accelerometer. It's something close to

> 66 Rebelle's selection of digital paper surfaces can affect the path and behaviour of the watercolour paint 99

Rebelle 3 enables you to work in a variety of wet and dry media, including inks, as demonstrated by Philipp Neundorf.
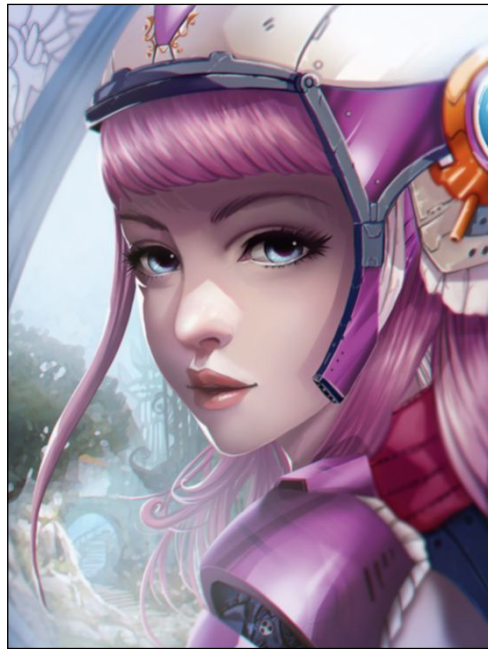
Illustrator and comic book artist Harvey Bunda says Rebelle was the software that made his transition to digital art possible.
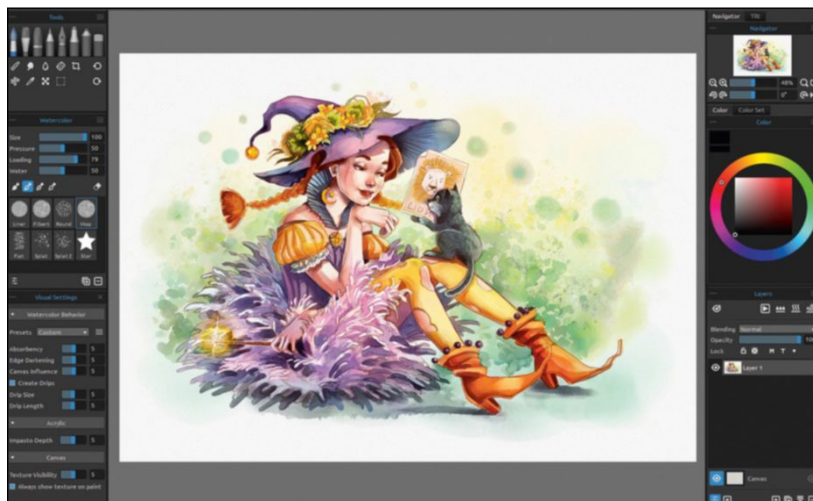
The clearly laid-out controls on the left of the screen helped Kamila to precisely control the effect of her brushes.

magic. And unlike physical watercolour, you can 'freeze' the paint movement with a single key press. Rebelle's selection of digital paper surfaces can also affect the path and behaviour of the watercolour paint, depending on how rough the grain is.

CREATE YOUR OWN BRUSHES

If there's a drawback, it's that you have to find the best brush settings yourself, through trial and error: there are only a few brush presets to choose between until you've taken the time to make your own. At least that task is made easier in Rebelle 3 with the Brush Creator. You can import graphics to represent brush shapes or grain, making some truly fanciful creations a possibility, then play with Spacing, Opacity and Jitter before saving the result as a permanent preset.

That isn't the only trick up Rebelle 3's sleeve: you can now paint with masking fluid on its own layer, which gives you more control over how the mask affects the flow of paint.

Elsewhere, new additions include a Magic Wand tool, and canvas size that's only limited by your computer memory's ability to accommodate it. More technically minded artists will appreciate the options to use a ruler or set up a perspective grid, and to have a reference image displayed in an on-screen overlay.

There's still plenty of untapped potential for Rebelle's developers to explore in future releases – more presets and more paint media come to mind – but the effectiveness of the watercolours alone is enough to make this affordable software worth adding to your creative toolbox.

ARTIST INTERVIEW
# HARVEY BUNDA

This artist wishes Rebelle was available to use years ago…

What was your reaction to the latest version of Rebelle?
I was awestruck! Shifting to digital media was hard because I needed to find tools that could mimic my traditional oil painting style and techniques. I usually ended up making or customising my own brushes and tools just to suit my needs, and it was quite hard. As awesome as "me making my own tools" sounds, I failed at it a lot of times and it took years for me to adjust. Rebelle has changed all my perspective and pipeline for all my works, making it easier, more robust and faster.

Which new feature do you like best in Rebelle 3?
The best features would be the Masking Fluid Layer and the Ruler and Perspective tools. I think the Masking Fluid Layer works best with the watercolour tool: it's just like the real thing. As I'm also a comic artist, the Perspective tool has greatly helped my background and elements for my comic pages.

How has Rebelle changed your working process?
When I started as an artist, I had to use multiple applications just to achieve the quality of the art that I'm doing right now, and it was hard for both me and my machine. If I had this tool when I was starting out, my creative life would have been so much easier.

Which missing feature would you like to see in Rebelle 4?
I hope that they could add more adjustments on layers and more options to edit layers. Finally, how about developing a colour palette that can react to the lighting of the artwork?

Harvey is Gunship Revolution's creative director. He's also been a freelance artist for more than a decade.

www.harveybunda.com

DETAILS

Features
■ Wet media painting tools
■ Dry media drawing tools
■ Brush Creator
■ Layers and blending modes
■ Masking Fluid Layer
■ Digital paper stocks
■ Canvas size limited only by memory
■ Ruler and Perspective tools
■ Reference image and Preview overlays

System Requirements
PC: Intel i7 or equivalent AMD processor, 64-bit Windows 8 or 10, 16GB RAM, 1GB hard disk space, graphics card with 4GB VRAM
Mac: Intel i7 processor, macOS 10.12 or later, 16GB RAM, 1GB hard disk space, graphics card with 4GB VRAM

Rating
★★★★☆

Acclaimed games art director Raphael Lacoste makes a strong argument for how drawing in traditional media can enhance your digital art.
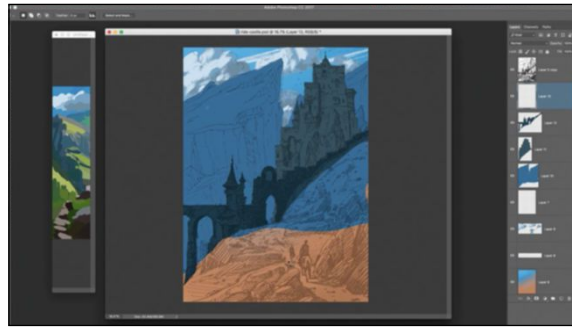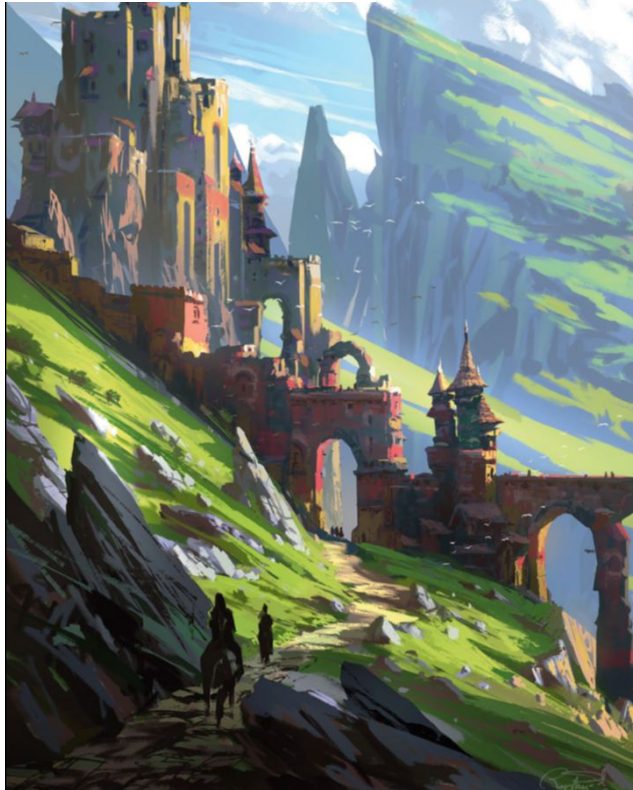
Raphael uses the flatting technique (common in comic book colouring) to divide his composition into different areas, working on each in its own layer.

The original sketch stays visible for most of the process, although it's largely erased by the final stages.
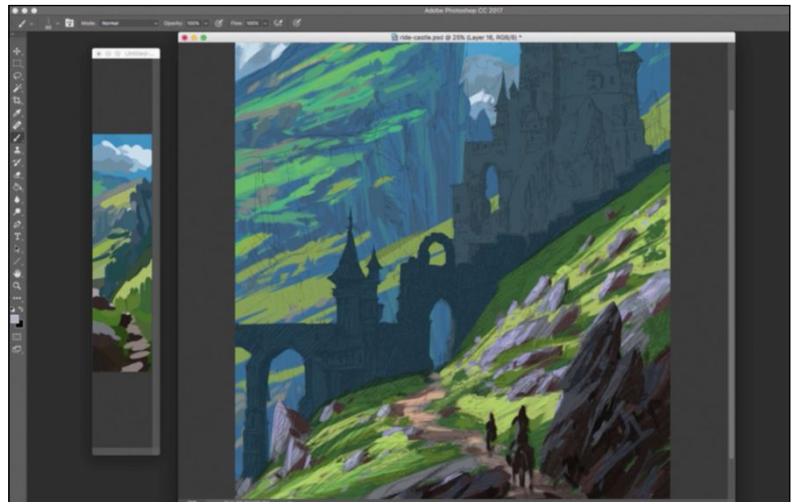
Traditional To Digital

OLD SCHOOL Art director Raphael Lacoste shows how staying in touch with old forms of making art feeds your ability to create compelling digital images

Publisher Raphael Lacoste **Price** £5 **Format** Download **Web** www.gumroad.com/raphaellacoste

Given the power of today's digital creative tools and hardware, what do traditional methods have to offer? Raphael Lacoste's brisk training video provides some compelling insights that could make you reconsider the value of the old ways, together with plenty of useful digital art tips along the way.

Raphael's artwork – an imposing castle in an epic setting – begins on paper as he busily lays down cross-hatching with a technical pen, building up values to suggest detail and communicate depth. A computer could have provided an equally viable drawing medium, but Raphael argues that drawing real-world subjects on paper makes you think more about what you're looking, and how to represent it in your art. Even though this is predominantly a digital project, starting in traditional media brings

qualities to the artwork that would have been absent otherwise.

After he scans the sketch and brings it into Photoshop, the digital tools take over. Raphael sticks to conventional painting techniques here, steering clear of photo-bashing or 3D assets. He starts by breaking up the composition into its main components with selection tools, placing each on its own layer. This enables him to control the depth and contrast of each element.

As the painting evolves, Raphael talks you through how he thinks about colour and value. You'll learn why he ensures that shady areas are saturated with colour, for example, as well as discovering a simple trick that makes it possible to paint loose brushstrokes while confining them to the object you're painting within. For a mere five pounds and an hour of your time, there are enough ideas here to fuel your creative growth for months.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Drawing from reference
- Cross-hatching textures
- Defining areas with flattening
- Working with values
- Working with colour
- Benefits of working in traditional media

Length
68 minutes

Rating
★★★★★

ARTIST PROFILE
RAPHAEL LACOSTE

Raphael is best known for his two periods with the games company Ubisoft, where he's art directed the major franchises Prince of Persia and Assassin's Creed. He's also been a senior art director for Electronic Arts Montreal, and has worked as a matte painter and senior concept artist on films including Terminator Salvation, Journey to the Center of the Earth and Jupiter Ascending. He's currently brand art director for Assassin's Creed at Ubisoft.
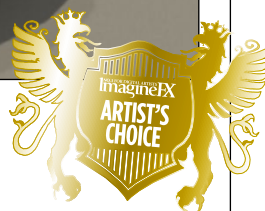
www.raphael-lacoste.com

James Clyne and Masa Narita worked together to create the final version of the film's pristine Millennium Falcon.

Warren Beatty's character from the 1971 film McCabe and Mrs. Miller inspired Glyn Dillon to come up with this dramatic look for Han.

The Art of Solo: A Star Wars Story

SINGLE MINDED Enjoy beautifully realised concept art from the film featuring a wannabe smuggler in a galaxy far, far away

Author Phil Szostak **Publisher** Abrams **Price** £30 **Web** www.abramsbooks.com **Available** Now

The latest standalone Star Wars film may have stumbled at the box office, but as this art-of book reveals, it wasn't for a lack of inspirational visual material.

Detail-packed concept sketches and full-colour paintings appear throughout the book, and the layout gives them plenty of room to breathe. Lengthy captions reveal the thinking behind the art, too: the costumes of
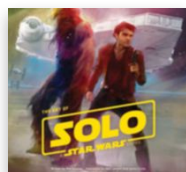
the lead characters, the vehicles of an Empire in ascension, the creatures from a criminal underworld, the many dangerous and exotic environments, and more. And we're glad to see that all artists are properly credited.

Fans will be taken by multiple visions of the original Millennium Falcon (some hits, plenty of misses!), a variety of compelling depictions of everyone's favourite Wookie, and a breakdown of

> ❝ **Fans will be taken by multiple visions of the original Millennium Falcon** ❞

This painting of Lando's droid companion L3-37 by Adam Brockbank conveys her strong independent attitude, if not her final design.

the scene where Han Solo first meets his future furry friend.

There's no hint of the controversy that hung over the production of Solo. Namely, the firing of original directors Chris Miller and Phil Lord during filming and their replacement by Ron Howard. And yet it's possible to read between the lines and realise how much the film changed as a result.

As forewords by production designer Neil Lamont and design supervisor James Clyne make clear,

the story of the young Han Solo was originally to have a unique look. Their vision was to draw on the late Sixties; in Neil's words, to be "cool, retro, hip, retro, lo-fi" and inspired by "muscle cars, Shaft, Route 66, travelling east to west across the United States, Jimi Hendrix, a boy's dream (back then), the height of the Cold War, the arms race, 2001: A Space Odyssey, McCabe & Mrs. Miller, Planet of the Apes and The Driver."

While it's frustrating that there are only hints of this intriguing vision in the final film, plenty of sketches and concepts along this line of thinking appear in the book. And as author Phil Szostak explains how the production design evolved over time, it's clear to see – although never explicitly stated – how many of these original concepts were altered dramatically after Ron Howard stepped in.

In short, this could be seen as two great books in one: the art of the film, and the art of the film that might have been. As the scruffy-looking nerf herder said later on in his smuggling career, "Here's where the fun begins."

RATING ★★★★★

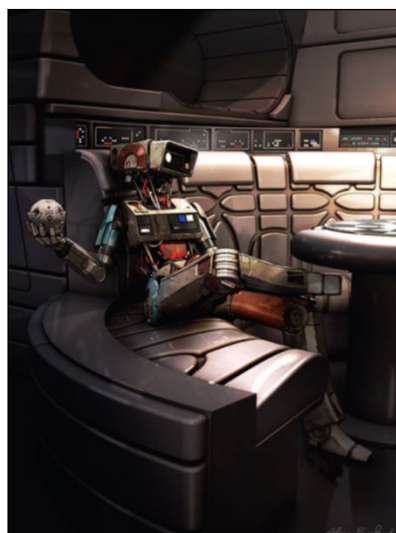# The Story of INC

PASSION PROJECT A man and his robot struggle to stay
alive in this well-produced picture book for grown-ups

Authors Neil Blevins, Bill Zahn and Stephan Bugaj **Publisher** Soulburn Press **Price** £19 **Web** www.neilblevins.com **Available** Now
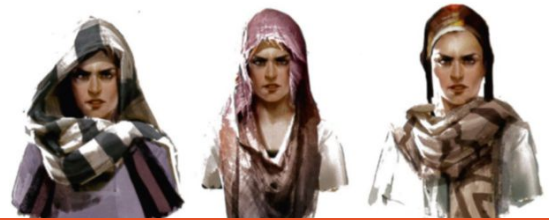
Back in 2012 Neil Blevins, a Canadian concept designer who was then working at Pixar, teamed up with fellow artist Bill Zahn to begin a passion project. Soon, a number of other artists came on board, and The Story of Inc is the finished result.

At the core of this Kickstarter-funded publication, which is now available to buy online, is a picture-

Although multiple artists worked on the story, the book's illustration style remains consistent.

The lead character Landis spends time getting to know INC, his new robot companion.

book story for grown-ups: the heartwarming adventure of a man and his robot struggling to survive on a desert planet. The final third of the book is taken up by a 'making of' section, with detailed breakdowns of the art for the various characters, vehicles and environments.

You'll also find a link to a ton of related material online, including written tutorials and almost two hours of video explaining how all the imagery was created.

This part storybook, part art-of book that's been six years in the making is one of the oddest publications we've seen in the ImagineFX office. And yet we enjoyed it, largely because the high quality of the story absolutely matches the quality of the artwork. If you fancy splashing the cash, an extra £4 will get you a copy of the book's Premium edition, which features a faux cloth cover and gold foil emblem.

RATING ★★★★☆

Vision: Colour and Composition for Film

EXPERT LESSONS A world-renowned production designer shares his
wisdom on colour and composition in this superlative instruction guide

Authors Hans P Bacher and Sanatan Suryavanshi **Publisher** Laurence King **Price** £32 **Web** www.laurenceking.com **Available** Now

Production designer Hans P Bacher is best known for creating the iconic looks of Disney classics such as The Lion King, Beauty and the Beast and Aladdin. In this book, he shows how to use colour and composition to evoke an emotional response.

Of course, just because an artist is famous doesn't mean they write good books. But in this case, Hans and his co-author Sanatan Suryavanshi pull it

As Hans explains, different lighting schemes help to create mood and enhance aspects of a scene.

The book contains exercises for putting your new-found knowledge into practice, such as identifying different colour strategies.

out of the bag. This 242-page hardback is as elegantly designed and illustrated as it is useful and informative.

There's an almost imposing amount of content inside, and it would probably take you weeks to plough through it all properly. Yet everything is concisely written and easy to follow. And while this book is grounded in the world of animation, the principles it

explains – from using lines, shapes, colour and light to creating characters and understanding the psychology of imagery – can be applied to all methods of creating art.

In short, this is an excellent resource that every artist should consider adding to their collection.

RATING ★★★★★

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IX

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX
Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

This issue:

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Edward Dillon

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Fineliner, dip pens **WEB:** www.instagram.com/epdillon

Edward uses an ink stippling technique in his art. "It gives a unique intimacy to detailing, which can be both maddening and addictively compelling," he says.

1 THE CAT, THE MASK, HIS MIND AND THEIR TROUBLE

"I used to have quite long and horrible dreams. This drawing started as an unplanned, automatic drawing. I got carried away and started to ink it with a dip pen."

2 TREE

"This poster was commissioned to advertise a play called Into The Woods, which showed at The Cockpit in London earlier this year."

3 INSIDE OUT

"My inner demons. I've been plagued by depression, among other things, for most of my adult life; wrapped in its loving embrace."

Traditional Artist FXPosé

Sarah Mason

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Pencil, ink, watercolour **WEB:** www.artbysarahmason.com

"My work blends strong traditional techniques with contemporary themes, gravitas and whimsy, lines and colours, and themes of flora and fauna," says Sarah, a freelance artist based on the south coast of England.

1 NOOR
"Noor is a character for one of my supporters on Patreon. They have lots of interesting characters that enable me to explore lots of quirky colour combinations and creature designs."

2 DEATH'S HEAD
"In this watercolour piece I experimented with solidifying multiple techniques to form a new style and composition."

3 HERCULES
"This is part of my ongoing project Beautiful Beasts in Blossoms."
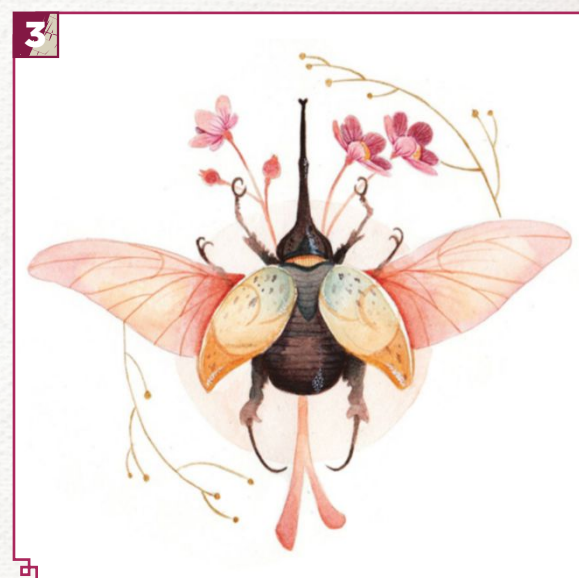
4 BABY PINK

"I'm not sure if it's the wrinkles or their permanent scowls, but Sphinx cats are extremely fun to draw. I usually paint animals in floating poses, to symbolise freedom and relaxation."

5 COIL

"This snake was a milestone piece while exploring new techniques and it was part of my very first Kickstarter campaign."

6 HAKU

"Studio Ghibli has always been a big influence for me. Haku, from Spirited Away, was a watercolour piece where I explored calm, cool colours and keeping the style realistic with a minimal amount of line work."

Watercolour   *Gold leaf*   *Silver leaf*

CREATE ARTWORK THAT SHINES

Discover how SOPHIE KLESEN (aka SoMK) brings her watercolour painting Estones to life through the application of gold and sterling silver leaf

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

Planning is key to my creative workflow. In this workshop you'll see how I consider every stage beforehand: from creating sketches and thumbnails, to transferring the design to paper, to gilding and painting the piece.

My studio comprises two big tables with several lighting sources and a swivel chair. I use table easels, too – mainly because of wandering cats, but also because I need to change position once in a while. Sometimes work flat on the table (mostly when gilding) or at an angle on the easel, for when I'm painting.

ARTIST INSIGHT

PREPARE YOUR SURFACES

When gilding on paper, use 200lbs/300g and think about stretching it first. I often prepare my boards this way, even stretching 400lbs paper. This will be useful when gilding large areas and even more so when gilding with illuminator gesso, which is a mix of plaster and glue, and can buckle the paper.

My approach to illumination gilding techniques goes hand in hand with the hoarding of art supplies. Pigments of all sorts, brushes, watercolours, papers, vellum have a tendency to quickly accumulate, so I've had to make space among the cupboards and shelves in my studio.
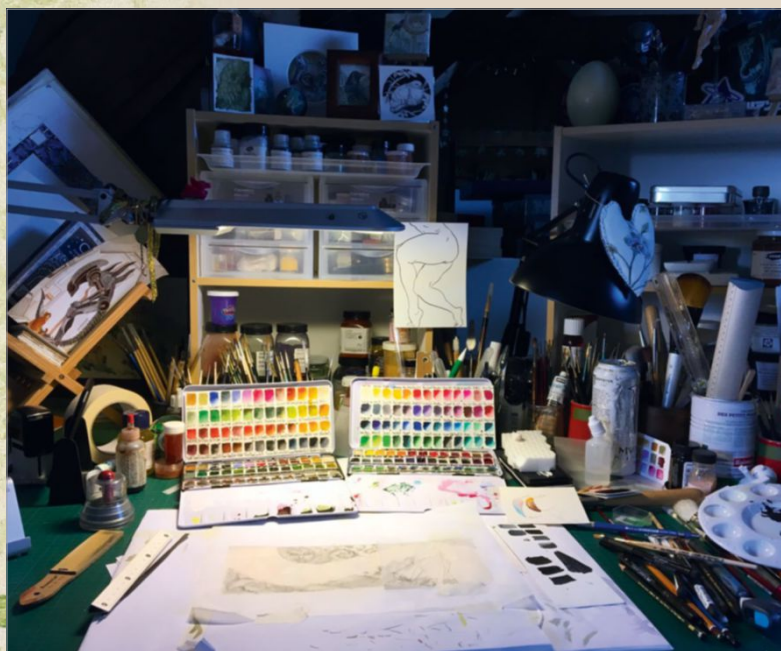
Once you start, gilding is an art with little leeway for improvisation. Yet as you'll see in my workshop, it's possible to change course right in the middle of the creative process!

Even skilled artists can learn something new when they work in an unfamiliar medium. When exploring the possibilities of gilding, don't rush into things. You'll need plenty of practice to feel confident around the various sizes, leaves and burnishing tools, as well as additives, mediums and sometimes historical pigments, papers and vellum. It's a whole new world for you to explore.

You'll learn something new every day for the rest of your life, as you lose yourself in history books and museums. I can guarantee it!

This painting was an enjoyable experience for me. As you'll soon see, even if you think you're prepared for everything, what sometimes feels like a good idea in your head and even in thumbnail form, doesn't perfectly translate at a larger size. Sometimes, gold and silver don't shine the way you want them to!

Still, it makes for an interesting journey. And who wants to travel on a smooth road anyway…?

SoMK was born in Canada but now lives in France with her husband and cats, in a very quiet countryside hamlet. She says the proximity of several medieval cities offers her an endless source of inspiration. You can see more of her work at www.somkart.com. ➤

Traditional Artist Workshop

1 *Sketches galore!*

Everything starts from a small sketch. I steadily fill blank books or loose sheets of paper every day, drawing whatever comes to mind. Sometimes a small sketch turns into a bigger painting. The aim, of course, is to sketch a lot, all the time. First, because the results can be funny; and second, because it makes us better artists.

2 *Turn a sketch into useful thumbnails*

Ah, thumbnails! Now this is an especially important stage. It's when you decide what the painting will roughly look like, its layout, the atmosphere you want to convey and any colour choices. It's the first time you can translate what's in your head into tangible mini-images on paper. So many possibilities… it's hard to pick just one.

3 *The power of tracing paper*

Tracing paper enables you to sketch different elements, arrange them and finalise the composition of your painting. Not all tracing papers are made equally. I prefer to use thin sheets for sketching and layout decisions. To finalise the design before transferring it, I prefer a thick tracing paper that I'll keep for reference.

4 *Transferring the design*

I transfer the art on to a very thick and smooth Canson artboard. When you work on vellum you might choose to use sanguine (red chalk) instead of graphite powder, which can become stuck in the pores of vellum. Its greasiness won't help watercolours, either. I prefer to use sanguine, even when working on paper.

GILDING TIP

GOLD GOES FIRST
If you're using different metal leaves, gild with gold first! Gold adheres to gold, but will leave sparkles elsewhere.

5 Setting the design
Because I'll take a long time working on the design, I don't want it to disappear too quickly. So I go over it with a thin brush, applying a light wash of iron oxide. I pick up the remaining sanguine powder with a kneaded eraser so as not to smudge it on the areas that I want to stay white.

6 Adding grisaille in the leaves
Before working with grisaille you need to decide where the values will be. I start by brushing a few layers of very transparent colours on top. The basic grey is a neutral grey, and the layers of colours have some egg white in the mix to provide a good base for the glaze.

7 Protect and refine
Because this is a lengthy project, I need to maintain my interest, so I jump from one part to another to keep the work varied and let the various paints dry. I cut and rearrange a lot of papers throughout the process. It's now time to bring some details to the central area.

8 Gold and silver leaves
Now I brush in gold size (tinted with iron oxide for readability) and apply transfer gold leaf and loose sterling silver leaf. I'm not aiming for a shiny rendering, but rather a more weathered, powdery look. All the details on the various leaves will have to be painted afterwards. ➤➤
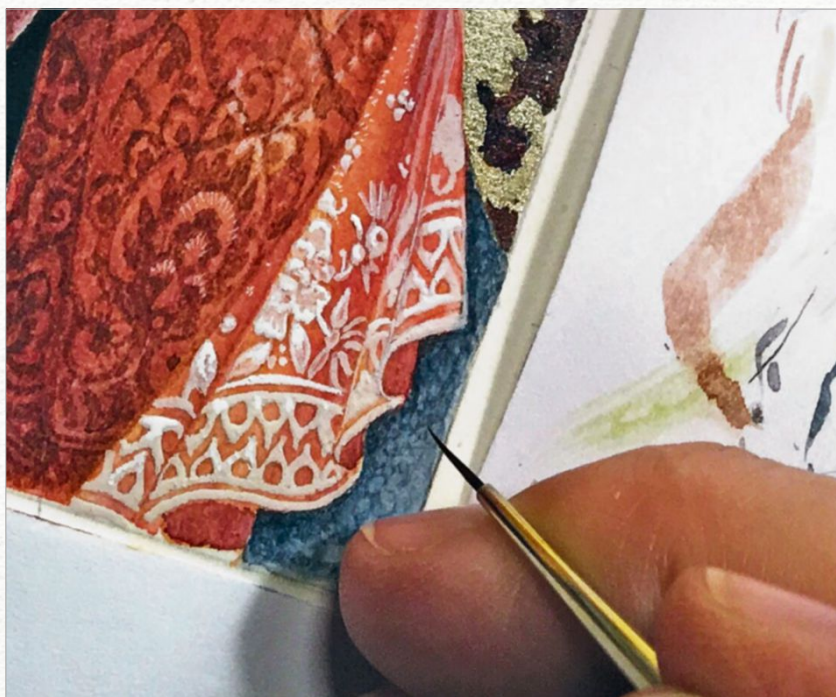
9 Tackle the details in the cloth elements

I find painting details such as the embroidery on the cloak very relaxing. The main colours are three Quinacridone watercolours: Yellow, Sienna, and a deeper Burnt scarlet for the shadows. The details are painted in translucent Eggshell white and Titanium white. I use a Princeton Monogram series 3050 brush: the tip is thin and precise, and perfect for the task.

10 The birds fail to take flight

Something is bugging me. The gold and red background looks overpowering. The birds are lost in that complex shiny design – and if I follow through with my intention of painting all the details of the Acanthus leaves, things will look even worse. I carry on painting the background and the birds while thinking about this...

BRUSH TIP

LINE STRATEGY
When drawing long lines in elaborate borders, choose thick brushes with thin tips. They enable you to draw fluid lines easily.

ARTIST INSIGHT

PAINTING ON GOLD
When you've finished gilding and you want to paint something on the gold, bear in mind that the metal leaf will do everything it can to shake off the wet paint. The answer is to either add a wetting, dispersant agent to the mix, or to paint the area first with, for example, ox gall.

11 Illustrate an Iranian-style vine element

I decide to use a very light Sap green wash, which helps to knock back the complex design of the border. I sketch one of the corners and mirror it four times all around the painting. I then design the middle sections to complete the painting's border. I want to keep the monochrome fabric looking vibrant.
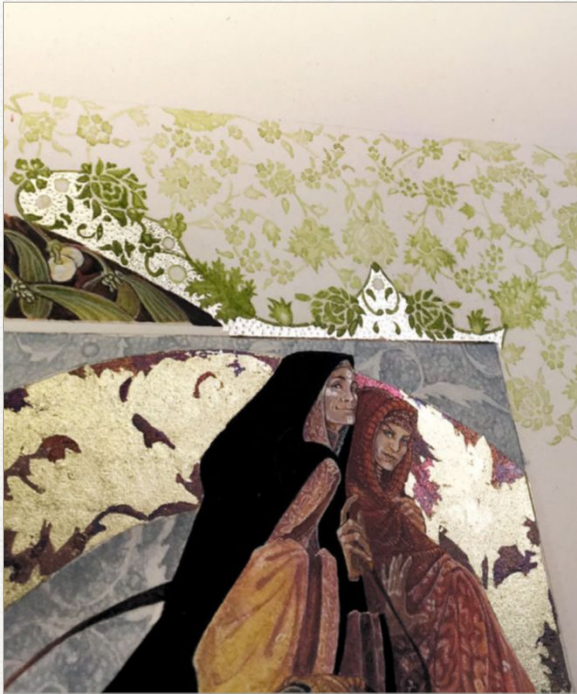
12 *Adding Champagne gold*

I apply Champagne gold leaf on the inner side of the border. I work it to generate an interesting texture to the gold and make it a little less shiny. I really want to keep a subdued look to that border. A strong colour and shiny gold could make it look unsubtle and off-putting.

13 *Finally, a big change of heart*

No, no, no – those gold and red leaves are just too loud! I'm losing my birds in there, because all I can see are just see the shiny parts! But I know that using oil gold size will enable me to correct this with another layer of copper leaf! A pentimento if I ever saw one, but I'm sure the piece will look so much better for it.

14 *Copper to the rescue!*

The surrounding details are now much clearer: they're warm and blend in when I add a layer of translucent red and green flowery designs on top. The paint adheres to the leaf thanks to the added ox gall. I like the result of this move. It shows you can always change your mind, if you have the confidence to act on your ideas.

15 *On to the finish line!*

From here it's just a case of putting cherries on top! I refine, add details and straight lines to tidy things up. I play with the white fireflies and the very deep black on the cloak, then tweak the colours and, because I could keep on painting in there for hours, declare it done! Now let's start something new…

Core skills: Part 3
PUT THE COLOUR INTO WATERCOLOUR

In part three of this watercolour series, KELLY MCKERNAN breaks down how to choose your watercolours, mix them and then create a limited palette

The most exciting part of working with watercolours is watching those luminous colours come alive and react to water on paper. However, the fun dies down when the watercolours you're trying to use just aren't doing what you want them to, and that can happen often.

Every watercolour has different properties for different uses, and so part of understanding what works best for you involves a lot of practice and experimentation. A basic understanding of the colour wheel and a starter palette of colours will go a long way. Colour schemes are like shortcuts for guaranteed colour harmonies or provocative compositions. However, integrating a limited colour palette is my favourite route to a successful painting, using only a few colours to create a wide range of possibilities.

In this article, we'll be looking at how to combine the properties of watercolour along with colour schemes and palettes to get the results that make watercolour so special, and how to avoid the pitfalls of combining ill-suited watercolours.
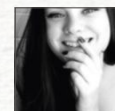
Kelly creates original paintings for galleries, travels for conventions, and mentors students via her Patreon. See her art at www.kellymckernan.com.

Prussian Blue by Schmincke is a semi-opaque, staining cool blue watercolour. Its flow need a little work to get moving and mixing, but its vibrancy makes up for it. It does well with water blossoms and salt, but layering is limited because it's not transparent.

Cobalt Violet Deep by Daniel Smith is a transparent, low-staining watercolour. While the colour is gorgeous and its high granulation offers possibilities for achieving texture, the flow is limited, making it difficult to spread. However, because it's a transparent colour, it's easy to lift off the paper when needed.

Permanent Rose by Winsor & Newton is a transparent, staining but brilliant colour and one of my favourites to work with. It's easy to control and its flow is fairly high, which makes it easy to mix. It also reacts with water seamlessly and because it's transparent, it's an excellent colour to glaze with.

Daniel Smith's Indigo is one of my favourite colours to mix and add depth to my work without muddying it up. It's a transparent colour and offers a very high range in value. However, it's a low-staining colour, so any stray marks with this one and you'll have to get creative in removing it!

1 Not all colours are equal

Watercolours are either transparent, semi-transparent or opaque. With transparent colours, the white of paper will show underneath. With the opposite, the luminosity is diminished and layering becomes difficult. Another characteristic you'll see is staining versus non-staining. With staining colours, the watercolour won't readily be lifted after applied to the paper, which will make any stray marks a pain to deal with. Lightfastness determines how well the pigment stands up to sunlight and acids over time, so ratings of I and II are recommended. The properties of watercolour may seem intimidating; however, with practice, you'll understand which properties in watercolour to look for when formulating a palette.

Cadmium Yellow Medium by Daniel Smith is a semi-transparent and low-staining, vibrant, warm yellow watercolour. Its flow is decent and it mixes really well with vibrant, transparent colours. Because this isn't a transparent yellow, its layering properties are a little hindered, but because it's so rich, you won't need to layer it too heavily.

2 Understanding colour

Before choosing your palette, it's important to develop a basic understanding of colour theory and how colours relate to one another. This will aid you in choosing appropriate colour palettes for your paintings, to evoke a mood or emphasise a concept. This is also essential in choosing the tubes you mix new colours with. Colour temperature, hue and purity are all characteristics to consider when developing your painting.

A colour's hue is simply the name of the colour in its most basic form and describe its location on the colour wheel: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet.

The temperature of a colour is the suggestion of warmth or coolness. Warm hues are inviting, active and come forward in a composition. Cool hues are relaxing, refreshing and tend to fall back. On a colour wheel, reds, oranges and yellows are considered warm hues, while greens, blues and violets are cool hues. However, any colour can be warm or cool in relation to another, such as red violet (cool) versus red orange (warm).

The purity, or intensity, of a colour is its saturation. On a colour wheel this is the colour at its purest form. To dull a colour, simply add its complementary colour, or its opposite on the colour wheel. The more vibrant a colour, the more attention it draws – especially when it's a transparent or semi-transparent colour. Dulling hues will reduce tension and lessen the mood.

3 Building your palette

A traditional palette comprises a warm and cool version of the primary colours, together with any additional colours that supplement mixing. In general, try not to overload your palette with too many semi-transparent or opaque colours, since these won't lend themselves well to mixing and layering. For more intense colours, transparent and staining colours will make up most of your palette. For a dull palette, earthier staples such as burnt sienna, indigo and sepia will be prevalent, but expect to dilute to avoid muddiness.

I keep Quinacridone purple close by at all times, because it's become an excellent colour to mix with. I've found violets in the past difficult to mix without losing intensity. It's excellent for glazing because it's transparent.

Warm side: Permanent red, Cadmium yellow, Ultramarine blue, Sap green, Permanent rose and Neutral tint.

Neutral tint is essentially the perfect mixture of all primaries that complete the full colour spectrum, which when mixed together work to cancel out the light value in each other. To use Neutral tint, try adding it slowly to an intense colour and watch it become a duller shade, without having to add its complement.

Cool side: Pyrrol crimson, Lemon yellow, Prussian blue, Viridian green, Quinacridone purple and Indigo.

Traditional Artist Workshops

4 *Colour schemes*

One reason it's important to understand how the colour wheel works is in using it as a map to help you choose a colour palette. Using a colour scheme is an excellent place to begin that process, with many offering tried-and-true combinations of colours that help determine the mood and assist in expressing the idea. Here are a few of my favourites.

Monochromatic is an easy solution for guaranteeing colour harmony in a piece, because it depends entirely on a range of values to offer contrast. When choosing a watercolour to do this with, look for a deep colour that offers a wide range, such as Quinacridone purple.

Analogous is a colour scheme that makes use of three to four colours that are next to each other in the colour wheel. In my example, I'm using Quinacridone purple with Prussian Blue and Permanent Rose to develop Violet, Red violet and Blue violet. Invariably, this results in using the warm and cool versions of a colour and lends itself to bright, harmonious palettes because the mixtures don't dull or offer contrast. Instead, you have to rely on value range to determine contrast.

A complementary colour scheme involves two colours that are opposite of one another on the colour wheel. In my example, I've added lemon yellow with my Quinacridone violet. These opposites enhance each other and also pack solutions for contrast by mixing the two to create duller colours.
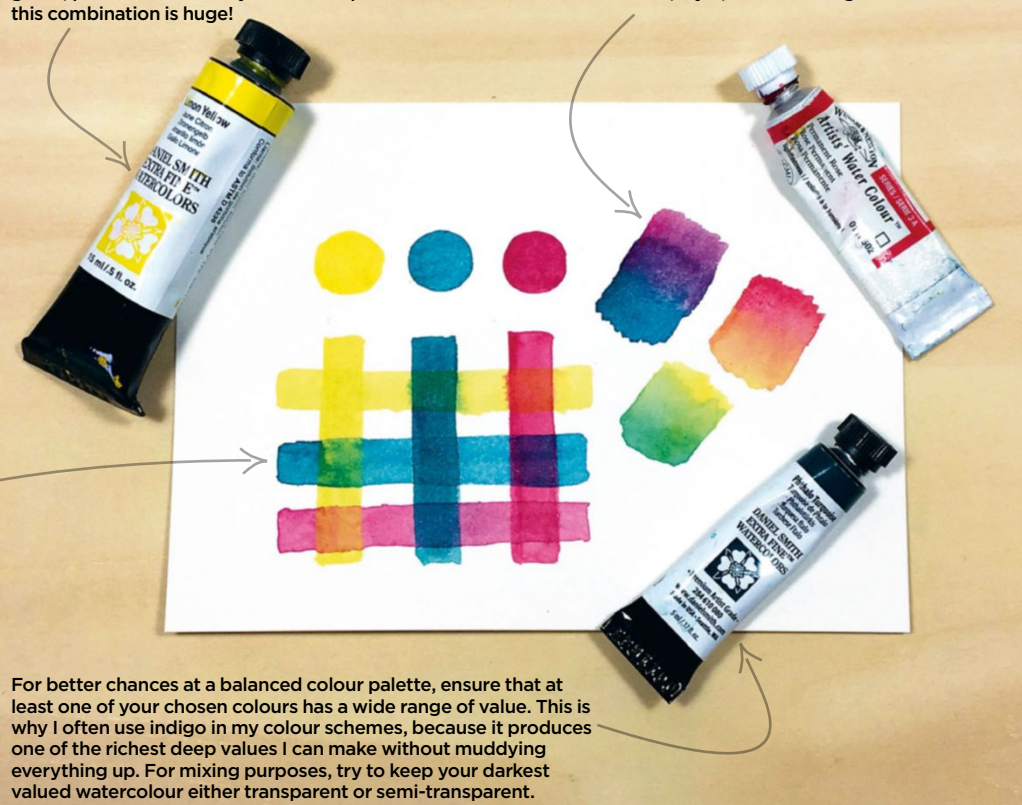
Split complementary colour schemes are ideal for creating an intriguing mood. This is achieved by choosing one colour and then the two colours surrounding its complement, such as yellow, red violet and blue violet.

5 *Unifying your palette*

Now that your palette is set up and you understand how various watercolours interact with one another, let's choose a limited palette. Often what results in a muddy painting lacking colour harmony is when the artist chooses too many colours to work with. The easiest path to a harmonious use of colours is by limiting it to between two and four colours. A wide range of colours can be created with very little, but pack a huge punch in a final painting.

If you begin running into problems with colours you've chosen, try to figure out what's causing it. Is one of your colours opaque and mixing it makes the colours muddy? Could one of your colours have high granulation and that's causing your blending to be funky? Do you have too many unsaturated colours? Try introducing a vibrant, transparent colour.

For this example, I'm using Lemon yellow, Permanent rose and Pthalo turquoise – a triad of sorts. Together, these create six distinct colours, including a spring green, peach and a moody violet. The potential with this combination is huge!

When I'm choosing a colour palette, I do tests similar to this, where I practice combining the colours in my palette to see how they react with one another, layer, and blend together.

For better chances at a balanced colour palette, ensure that at least one of your chosen colours has a wide range of value. This is why I often use indigo in my colour schemes, because it produces one of the richest deep values I can make without muddying everything up. For mixing purposes, try to keep your darkest valued watercolour either transparent or semi-transparent.

COMING SOON...
NEW SERIES ON FIGURE DRAWING!

Master artist **Patrick J Jones** begins a brand-new eight-part workshop series on the fundamentals of figure drawing, starting in **ImagineFX issue 167**!
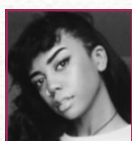
First Impressions

✳ Olivia Rose ✳

A mystery benefactor planted the art seed in this illustrator's fertile mind…

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I grew up in the countryside in England. There's a lot of greenery and it's really beautiful. I love incorporating nature into my work especially flowers. Living here has probably fuelled that.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your artwork?
My first influence is my mother. She's a fashion designer and growing up I always saw her creating beautiful things. She has gorgeous big eyes and long curly hair, and I have a little of her in all my pieces.

I also watched a lot of cartoons and anime. The creepy ones like Courage the Cowardly Dog always grabbed my attention the most. I also love watching nature documentaries – specifically The Blue Planet, which is produced by the BBC. The ocean is so beautiful with many amazing natural structures that often make appearances in my work.

Is there a painting that you saw in your formative years that changed everything? What was it?
When I was young someone gifted me a fantasy book with the most amazing illustrations, which stuck in my mind for years. Weirdly, the book disappeared and no one in my family seems to know who gave it to me. Growing up, I never knew the name of the artist but just rediscovered his work! The artist is Wayne Anderson and the piece I always remember came from his book The Perfect Match. His work is so ethereal… I love it.

BLUE LILLY
"I created this pencil, pen and marker piece for an online art auction."

❝ **I get embarrassed looking at older work, but it's nice to see how I've grown as an artist** ❞

MERTURTLE
"The #MerMay challenge prompted me to draw this pencil and marker piece on watercolour paper. It also appears in my upcoming book Souls of the Sea."

Tell us about your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?
I think I was around maybe 14, 15 years old? Someone asked if I could draw them some custom originals. I was so surprised and excited that someone wanted to pay me to draw something! I always get so embarrassed looking back at older work, but it's always nice to see how I've grown as an artist and person.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
My most recent piece was a mermaid for #MerMay. Comparing the two pieces, it's crazy how much of a difference there is. My work when I was younger had a real cutesy or just plain creepy look about it. Now my work has so much more substance and depth.

Is making a living as an artist all you thought it would be?
In all honesty, being a full-time artist is probably much harder than I envisioned it would be. It's a lot of hard work and there are moments when you can feel disheartened or frustrated. Self-motivation is key, and it's not always easy to do that. But in saying all that, I absolutely love being able to do what I love every day. I feel super lucky.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
I would have told myself to stay focused, motivated and just keep on practising your craft. Master it now so you don't have to work so hard later. Ha ha, just kidding!

How has the industry of art changed for good since you've been working in it?
I think social media has really helped artists get out there way more! It's also made things more accessible to people that need it.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?
Every now and then I create pieces that always manage to correlate with a moment in my life. I recently created a piece called The Blue Angel' and it's probably one of the first pieces I've created that really expressed how I felt at a specific point in time.

What's your next step in art or life?
I think my biggest goal is to have my own studio space. At the moment I work from home. It's nice, but I think a studio would just be perfect!

Olivia is a fantasy/pop surrealism artist and has been in the industry for around 10 years. Over the past few years she's self-published three books with the most recent one having a Zodiac theme. You can see Olivia's work at www.lalasdreambox.com.